

The Marks of God's Blessings

by Zac Poonen

The new covenant brings spiritual blessings, including the forgiveness of sins and the blessing of the Holy Spirit, which are superior to the material blessings of the old covenant.

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Scripture: Philippians 3:8

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Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking to become more like Christ in character and values as the ultimate mark of God's blessing. It contrasts the earthly prosperity promised in the Old Covenant with the spiritual blessings and transformation offered in the New Covenant through Christ. The speaker highlights the need for humility, obedience, and a focus on eternal values rather than temporary worldly success.

Transcript

Thank you dear brother and all of you for having me here, it's a joy to share God's word with you. What a wonderful time of praise we had and what feelings we had as we sincerely said those words to Jesus himself who is in our midst. We must never sing merely for the melody but conscious that we are in the presence of Jesus our Savior and we are actually talking to him and saying how wonderful he is.

Now I was thinking how wonderful it would be if our daily life can be as good as the time of praise we had now. How wonderful it would be for life at home as husband and wife in the dark family has got that same spirit of joy all the time. So the Bible says rejoice in the Lord always.

There is a provision that God has made for us through the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the new covenant that people could never experience in old covenant times but they did have praise in the old covenant. You'd read the Psalms. I think they made a lot more noise than we did, a lot more instruments.

They were praising God but they could not carry that over into their daily life. It was a Sabbath exercise on Saturdays when they came to the temple or the synagogue. They would really praise the Lord and be so excited and then they would go back to their mundane defeated lives from Sunday to Friday and the Jewish people and then come back again Saturday for another time of praise and they felt there's nothing better than that.

It's all thank God at least once a week we can have a wonderful time together. It's something like the drunkard goes to a saloon. You know those they have restaurants nowadays called thank God it's Friday.

They go there because their week is over and they can have a wonderful time and then the boring Monday starts again and they wait for thank God it's Friday. I want to ask you whether you feel like that on Friday mornings. Oh we look forward to that to come together and praise God.

It's really a wonderful experience and I wouldn't say it's not genuine. It's absolutely genuine. I feel excited every time I praise God because this is what I'm going to do for eternity.

I'm not going to be preaching in heaven. It's finished on earth but in the short life that God gives us here on earth there's more than what those old covenant people could experience just once a week on a Saturday. See there's a phrase that we bandy about quite a bit.

Oh God bless you. God bless you. We write it in our emails and we speak to each other.

God bless you. We say it on our cell phones and even the president of the United States says God bless America almost every time he finishes speaking. What does it mean for God to bless us? Is God really interested in blessing America or UAE or India? If he does what is the evidence of it? What is the evidence that God has blessed you and me? It can be a phrase which is so becomes so we are so familiar with it that it has lost its meaning just like currency gets devalued and doesn't have the same value it had even a hundred years ago.

There are phrases like this that get devalued through the years and centuries that they don't mean anything now. When you say God bless you it's just a cliché. It's just an expression that we use to people and we don't even think what we're saying.

So I want to share with you what is the mark of God's blessing in this day? You know we're living in the 21st century. We don't want to live in the stone age. We don't even want to live in the 18th century where they had no cars or airplanes or electricity.

We want to live in the 21st century. We don't want to go back to another period of time where people were living in more primitive conditions. Spiritually also it's possible to live in the 21st century and live spiritually in BC conditions just like out in the jungles in Africa and Andaman islands there are tribes that are really living in the stone age even now.

They've never seen electricity, never seen cars or any such thing. In 21st century you can live in stone age conditions and it's possible for Christians in the 21st century to live in before Christ conditions. So let me show you something of the blessing of God that was in before Christ.

It's described in Deuteronomy in chapter 28. Deuteronomy 28 when Moses was giving his farewell message to Israel just before they entered the promised land, he told them how God would bless them. The whole chapter, it's an amazing chapter.

If you want to know what is the mark of God's blessing in the old covenant you've got to read just one chapter Deuteronomy 28. If you want to know what is the mark of God's cursing you, the opposite of blessing, it's in the same chapter. The first 14 verses dealt with how God would bless you and then the remaining 54 verses dealt with what would happen if God did not bless you.

So here was the evidence which Israel looked for. This was a great prophet, Moses, inspired by God telling them from God himself, this is how you will know Israel that God has blessed you and God's happy with you. And this is how you know that God's not happy with you.

And God's blessing, he told them, was dependent on one condition and that was that they had to obey whatever God had commanded. And God's blessing would be withdrawn if they did not obey what God had commanded. So let me just show you briefly.

Deuteronomy chapter 28 verse 1. It shall be, now it shall be, if you will diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. You know, Israel was supposed to be the highest of all the nations. That's why geographically God placed Jerusalem in the center of the earth, you know, equidistant from east, west, north, south, etc.

And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you if you will obey the Lord your God. There's only one condition, obey my commandments. And these blessings will not only come upon you but overtake you.

That means they'll go ahead of you. You'll be showered with these blessings. And it doesn't matter where you are.

You may be living in the city, verse 3, or you'll be living in the villages, in the countryside. God will bless you wherever you are. And the offspring of your body will be blessed.

That means your children will be blessed too. And those days there were farmers or shepherds looking after the flocks. They were not businessmen and office workers those days, so their prosperity depended on their land being blessed with abundant crops, on their flock and herds multiplying.

You know, even in the days of Job, his wealth was not counted in gold and silver, but in the number, if you read the book of Job chapter 1, it was the number of camels and oxen and sheep and all they had. That's how they counted wealth in those days, just like we counted dirhams or dollars or whatever it is. So he said the produce of your ground will be blessed.

And the offspring of your animals and the increase of your herd, the young of your flock will all be blessed. That was the prosperity of those days. And your basket and your kneading bowl will be blessed.

That means their food and when you come in, when you travel, you'll be blessed when you come in, you'll be blessed when you go out. And their enemies were all earthly. You know, Israel's enemies were all Philistines, Canaanites, Syrians, Moabites, Edomites.

And he says your enemies will rise up against you and they'll be defeated. They'll come out one way and they'll flee before you in seven ways. This is the mark of God's blessing that every earthly enemy they had would be defeated.

No earthly enemy would ever be able to overpower them. And the Lord will command his blessing upon your barns, verse 8, and what you put your hand to and he establishes a people to himself. And verse 11, the Lord will make you abound in prosperity.

And in the offspring of your body, you will have many children and a lot of money and your animals and herds will all multiply. And the Lord will open to you the good storehouse of heaven and give you rain. That was one of the great blessings in those days because there were farmers and whenever God blessed them, they had rain.

When God did not bless them, when he was angry with them, like in the days of Elijah, he shut off the heavens for three years, three and a half years. So this was the mark of God's blessing. In verse 13, the Lord will make open for you a storehouse and rain and you will lend to many nations, but you'll never borrow.

It's one of the marks of God's blessing that it's so much money that they didn't have to borrow a cent from anybody. And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail and you only shall be above, you'll never be underneath. What that meant was in terms of the other nations, it would be on top of everyone.

And all depends on that you don't turn aside, verse 14, from the words that command you. And the opposite of that, if you don't obey me, starts in verse 15. But if you don't obey me, then you'll be cursed wherever you go.

You can go from the city to the country, you'll be cursed here, you'll be cursed there. And the mark of the curse was that their lands would not bring so much fruit and their cattle would not multiply so much. There'd be confusion and curses, verse 20, and there would be all types of sicknesses.

The Lord will cause you to be defeated, verse 25. He'll smite you, verse 27, with the boils of Egypt and tumors and scavenged, which cannot be healed and smite you with madness. Many other things like that.

I don't want to read all of that. But the point I want to say in a nutshell is the mark of God's blessing upon Israel in the entire Old Testament times was 100% earthly. It was material prosperity, healthy family and children.

Basically, health, that was the Old Testament gospel. Very clear. And if you didn't obey God, then you'd lose health and you'd lose wealth.

And when you come into the new covenant, how has things changed? That's the question. When you turn to Ephesians in chapter one, you know, when Jesus took the cup on the last supper, it's the only time he used the word new covenant in the gospel. We know the Bible is divided into Old Testament and New Testament, which is really a misnomer because the Old Testament of the Bible has not been abolished.

Bible is one book. I mean, there's no place in the Bible in Genesis where it says this is the beginning of the Old Testament. There's no place in Matthew which says this is the beginning of the New Testament.

For convenience sake, man has put a little paper there saying New Testament and a paper at the beginning called Old Testament. It's not in the Bible. The Bible is 66 books.

It's all for us, every one page of it. But there is a covenant which God made with Israel on Mount Sinai, Moses, part of which we read just now, which was abolished when Christ died on the cross and rose again. It's very important to understand that.

That's why in the last night, Jesus took that cup and he, I don't have time to show you all those verses. You can read it in Luke 22. This is my blood of the new covenant.

The blood of Jesus Christ is going to seal a new covenant, just like the blood of bulls and goats sprinkled on that Old Covenant law sealed the Old Covenant. And if you want to know how much better new covenant blessings are to the Old Covenant blessings that we just read, you have to just compare the blood of Jesus to the blood of bulls and goats. It's enormous.

Infinite. And I find through the years, I've been a Christian now for 54 years since I was born again. And I've traveled in many lands and I've discovered that many, many Christians have not understood their blessings in the new covenant.

It's like some cheating lawyer has cheated them of their inheritance, which their father paid a great price to purchase for them. And as a servant of the Lord, this is a commission the Lord has given me for many years. To open the eyes of, by the Holy Spirit, of God's people to their inheritance in Christ.

I mean, whether they take it or not is another thing, but it is my duty to proclaim it and show it to people. In fact, it's the only message I've preached for more than 30 years. God's specific commission.

I want to be faithful to it till Jesus comes. So in Ephesians 1 verse 3, you read that in the new covenant, it says, blessed be the God and father upon Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us. Then we find that blessing.

You know, now we begin to understand what we are telling, what we mean when we use that phrase, God bless you. That's not what the president of the United States means when he says God bless America. He means something of Deuteronomy 28, the blessing.

Now the question is, do you mean the same thing when you tell somebody God bless you? And do you understand it the same way when you say God has blessed me? Blessed be the God and father upon Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us. There's that word with every spiritual lesson in the heavenly places in Christ. Now, if there was a verse like this in the old Testament, it would read like this blessed be Jehovah, God of our fathers, who has blessed us with every material and physical blessing in earthly places in Moses.

That would be how the old Testament blessing would read. And that we read in Deuteronomy 28. So we need to see that something changed when Christ came.

And this is the reason because we have not possessed our inheritance. We missed out on something. The devil has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they don't see the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ, that salvation and forgiveness of sins is free.

I mean, we see so many people who are blind to that truth. And that's why they light candles and roll on the ground and go on pilgrimages and take holy water and all types of things to get God's blessing and to get God's forgiveness. They go and dip in a river.

We haven't done any of those things. People can hardly believe that we did nothing to get the forgiveness of sins because it was all done on Calvary. There's not a one single thing that any of us could do to get even one sin of ours forgiven.

And we have millions to be forgiven. That's where the Christian gospel is unique, that it's free. Man is keeping on selling.

The devil is always keeping on stealing. God's always keeping giving people free. In fact, that's how you can identify a true servant of God.

He doesn't sell his products. God gives everything free. And what has he given us free? First of all, the forgiveness of our sins, absolutely free.

But is that the beginning and end of God's blessing? When it says here, God has blessed us with every blessing, spiritual blessing means blessing of the Holy Spirit. Every blessing of the Holy Spirit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus is mine. What does it mean that my sins are forgiven? No, it's a lot more than that.

That was the seal, the blood of Jesus, seal of the new covenant. You read in Hebrews 13, the blood of the everlasting covenant. I want to show you another verse in Hebrews chapter 8. Hebrews is not a very popular book with many Christians, and I'm not surprised because the devil doesn't want a lot of people to read it.

A couple of books the devil doesn't want you to read too often. One is Revelation and the other is Hebrews. He doesn't want you to read Revelation because it describes how the devil is going to be cast into the lake of fire.

He doesn't want people to know that. And he doesn't want people to read Hebrews because Hebrews describes the new covenant more than perhaps any other book. So let me show you Hebrews chapter 8. In verse 6, it says, Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry by which he is the mediator of a new covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

Are there really better promises than what we just read in Deuteronomy 28? I mean, is there something better than prosperity and physical health, freedom from sickness, the provision of all earthly needs and abundance so that our earthly enemies will be defeated? We'll win every court case. And what more do you want? Is there something better promises than those? Yes, there are. Verse 7. If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need, no occasion for a second.

In other words, those blessings promised in Deuteronomy 28, that was the ultimate that God could give to his people. And there was no need for a new covenant. There's no need for a second covenant at all.

But that was faulty, it says in verse 7. Faulty, not in the sense that, you know, like people make a motor car and then discover there's something faulty and then they produce another version of it, which is better than the previous one. And a few years later, they discover some other fault and make a better one. God doesn't make mistakes like that.

No. It was faulty in the sense that it was never intended to fulfill God's purpose. It was like, the law was like a temporary stopgap arrangement that God made until the Messiah came.

That's all. It was only a temporary stopgap arrangement. You know, something like the scaffolding that's put up to erect a structure and then the scaffolding is pulled down.

You don't keep the scaffolding up. People don't fall in love with the scaffolding. That's pulled down.

That's only temporary. The real building is the new covenant. We need to see that, brothers and sisters.

I pray that your eyes will be open or begin to be open this morning to something you've never seen before, that there's a new covenant established in Christ. And it's not enough to understand it intellectually. Jesus

once said concerning this new covenant in Matthew 11, 25, he said, Father, I thank you that you have hidden this from the clever and the intelligent.

That's Matthew 11, 25. I'm not inventing those words. Thank you that you have hidden these things from the clever and intelligent and revealed them to babes.

What shall we do if we unfortunately are clever and intelligent? Does that mean we can't understand? What it means is, when you come to scripture, you're to come with the heart of a baby, simply trusting and obeying, acknowledging that you really know nothing. That's how I come to scriptures. God's given me a certain amount of intelligence.

I can't be proud of it. It's just, I was born with it. You know, we can't be proud of the color of our skin or our height or genetic factors.

We were born with them. So we can't, none of us can boast about any intellectual ability we have. And it's good.

Many of you work here and you would never be able to work and earn money if you did not use your intellectual abilities. In every worldly pursuit, we need to use our intelligence and our knowledge. But when it comes to scripture and the things of God, you take that mind and lay it at the foot of the cross, die to it and say, Lord, reveal to me my spirit.

There's a part of us called the spirit, which is far deeper than mind. Man is body, soul, and spirit. Mind is a part of the soul.

And in the Old Testament, the tabernacle, there was outer court, holy place, most holy place, corresponding to body, soul, and spirit. And God dwelt in the most holy place. God dwells in man's spirit, not in our body or in our mind, but inside our body, in our spirit.

That's why mind is insufficient to understand God. Of course, we receive God's word through our ears right now, into our mind. But if it stops there, then there's a problem.

It has to go through ears or through eyes, to the mind, into our spirit. When it's entered our spirit, we become spiritual. Otherwise, we just understand scripture.

I mean, you can be a good teacher of chemistry or a good teacher of the Bible if you're clever. You can study chemistry with your mind. You can study the Bible with your mind.

That's what they do in Bible schools. But that doesn't make you spiritual. No.

Remember that, my brothers and sisters. There's a part of you deeper than your mind that can understand the things of God only if you've come with humility, like a babe. God has hidden these things from the clever and intelligent, not because he's against them.

But usually, clever and intelligent people are proud. They look down on people who are dumb, not so smart as them. It's the unfortunate thing in the human race that whenever we have some ability, which is 100% God-given, we somehow tend to boast about it as if though we produced it.

You and I didn't produce our intelligence. If you're smarter than somebody else, give God the credit for it. Don't take any of that credit yourself.

I mean, if I distributed a beautiful cake here to all of you, which I never made, and I pretended that I made it, take credit for it, I'd be a liar. That's exactly what we do when we take credit for our smartness or our intelligence or even our Bible knowledge or anything. What did Jesus say babes have? Humility.

If you humble yourself like this little child, you can enter the kingdom of heaven. So when we try to understand this new covenant, I want to encourage you to come with humility, to acknowledge that there could be many things that you don't understand with however smart and clever you may be. And that is why after so many years of reading the Bible, you still lose your temper at home.

And that is why after so many years of reading the Bible, you still lust after women with your eyes and you watch internet pornography in secret. Why is that? Why doesn't that spirit of praise we had just now permeate every area of our life? I'll tell you, because we lack humility. We have understanding, so much understanding that we can even explain to others.

We must let the Holy Spirit penetrate into our spirit. These things are revealed to babes or to those who would take a place of humility, acknowledging that when it comes to the things of God, we know nothing. God is my witness and that's how I come to study the scriptures.

I've studied this book for more than 50 years. I come to it and I say, Lord, all the intelligence I had in my earthly secular occupations, it's no use when it comes to this book. Teach me.

That old covenant it said was faulty. And it says in Hebrews 8 and verse 13, when God says a new covenant, he has made the first obsolete. Did you know that that first covenant is obsolete? Not the Old Testament of the Bible, those are 39 books of the Bible, but the old covenant God made with Israel on Sinai, that's obsolete.

It was abolished. Deuteronomy 28 is not for Christians who understands it. The Old Testament laws are not for Christians.

Bring your tithes into the storehouse, otherwise I will curse you. It's old covenant, by the way. Don't let any pastor frighten you with that verse.

And I will bless you if you bring it, it's old covenant. The new covenant is God loves a cheerful giver. If you put two cents like that cheerfully, that's what God cares for.

Not how much you give. It's attitude. The old covenant was how much you gave, 10%.

In the new covenant it is how you give, cheerfully. There's a world of difference between how you give and how much you give. Old covenant is how much you give, new covenant is how you give.

That's just one area. There are many other areas. The old covenant has been abolished.

A new covenant has come, which is far superior. Like there's a little ditty that goes like this. The law tells me to run, but gives me neither feet nor hands.

Better news the gospel brings, it tells me to fly, but gives me wings. The law tells me to run, but gives me neither hand nor legs nor hands, feet nor hands. But better news the gospel brings, it bids us run, it bids us fly, it gives us wings.

That's why when we say we are not under the old covenant law, it's been replaced by what you read in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, your righteousness must be more than the righteousness of the Pharisees. That was old covenant righteousness.

Yours must be higher. Did you hear Matthew 5, 22 that in the old covenant it says you must not murder, I say don't get angry. Old covenant says don't commit adultery, I say don't lust with your eyes.

The old covenant said love your enemies, love your friends, I say love your enemies. The old covenant it said you must pray and fast. I say do that, but don't let anybody know about it.

Jesus was constantly raising the standard. So when a person's living at that standard, he doesn't have to worry about these other things. I mean, this thing won't even happen because he's dealing with it at a deeper level.

Jesus spoke about a good tree and a bad tree. He said a bad tree can't bring forth good fruit. The tree itself has to be uprooted.

This old nature we've inherited from Adam, the Holy Spirit's come to put the ax to the root of it to bring us into a new covenant. So what is the blessing of the new covenant? Let me come to that. In Romans 8 and verse 29, Romans chapter 8 and verse 29, we read that God foreknew certain people.

Foreknew means he could look into the future, millions of years, thousands of years, and see entire human history and see who all would respond to the call of Christ. If you responded to the call of Christ, God knew that millions of years ago. He knew that before Genesis 1 verse 1. He foreknew Romans 8, 29.

He foreknew. That means he knew beforehand. He knew, oh, that person, I mean, there are thousands of people living in that city, but this person and that person and that person are going to respond to my gospel.

I know that. And their names are in the book of life. Not because God picked out names from a hat arbitrarily.

No. Election, 1 Peter 1 verse 1 and 2 says is according to foreknowledge. God did not elect arbitrarily.

That would be partiality and there's no partiality with God. He elected on the basis of foreknowledge, Peter says in 1 Peter 1. He knew, therefore he chose. It's something like seeing a video beforehand.

I mean, if we could see a video here, which has been taken, say, last week of some people doing good and some people doing bad. Well, you're just watching it. You're not influencing anybody on that screen.

It's the same way God can see a video of thousands of years ahead. He's not influencing any of them, just like you're not influencing what you see on the video screen. But he sees, ah, that person's going to respond to my gospel and that person's going to reject it.

That's how he chose us. Elected according to his foreknowledge. But what did he elect us for? It's one of those great controversial words in Christendom called predestination.

It comes in this verse. Whom he foreknew, he predestined. But the great argument in a lot of Christendom between the Calvinists and the Armenians is whether you're predestined to go to heaven or hell.

It's got nothing to do with heaven or hell. Not at all. We're not talking about heaven or hell here at all.

He predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, Jesus Christ, so that Jesus might be the firstborn among many brothers or our elder brother. Do you know that's why we call each other brother, sister? It's the highest title you can ever give to a Christian. Younger brother of Jesus Christ, younger sister of Jesus Christ.

That's why we call each other brother and sister. That's why I tell people, please don't give me these low titles like reverend and right reverend and all that. Get rid of that.

Call me by my rightful title, brother. A younger brother of Jesus Christ. That's what you are.

What other title do you want other than that? So that he can be the eldest brother among many brothers. That was God's plan. That heaven would be populated with a whole lot of people who look like Christ in character, not physically.

That we might be conformed to the image of his son. And if you never knew it before, know it today. That when God picked you out, your name, before the worlds were created, because he knew down in the 20th or 21st century, you'd respond to his call and become a child of his.

He made a plan for your life and he planned a pathway for you, which is he wanted you to become like Christ. You tell me, is there a greater blessing than that? Everything you read in Deuteronomy 28 is I tell you, garbage compared to becoming like Christ. And I'm using a scriptural word.

If you read Philippians chapter three, verse six to 10, Paul says, I count everything as garbage compared to Christ. He found the new covenant. He was a person who had studied the old covenant law, lived under it, fought for it, persecuted the Christians who he thought were leading people astray.

Then he got converted and discovered that the old covenant had been abolished and that he was to be in a new covenant. And when he realized that, he said, boy, all blessings of the old covenant are garbage compared to Christ. How many of you have found that, my brothers and sisters, that everything outside of Christ is rubbish? It's one of my favorite statements.

Everything outside of Christ is rubbish. I thank God I discovered that. I joined the National Defense Academy when I was 15 years old in January, 1955.

I was not converted then. My goal was to be the admiral of the Indian Navy. And I worked hard towards it.

I topped my class and I was commissioned as an officer in 1959 with that goal. And in the same month that I was commissioned in July 59, I found Christ or Christ found me and laid hold of me, came into my life. And believe it or not, it was a 180 degree change of direction in my ambitions almost immediately.

Here I was a young man all set with a goal to be somebody on this earth. And Christ came into my life and turned me around 180 degrees. Now a lot of people when Christ comes to their life, they turn 50 degrees, 90 degrees, some a little better, 120 degrees.

Have you turned 180 degrees? Say, Lord, my ambitions are no longer what I planned. It's only your will for my life from now on. I thank God that my turning was not gradual in steps of 10, 10, 10 degrees over a period of 50 years.

I'd have wasted my life if I had done that. I turned around completely and I said, Lord, I want to do your will. I don't know what it is.

And little by little, God began to show me. And then I realized that the greatest thing I could do was to live for him. But it took me many years after that to understand that even quitting my naval job in 47 years ago and serving the Lord, which a lot of people think, oh, that's a great sacrifice, that even that was not the greatest thing.

It was many years after that, that I began to understand that the greatest thing is not even quitting a job and going out of the missionary. The greatest thing that God wanted in my life was to change my whole character from the nature of Adam to the nature of Jesus Christ, to make me pure in my heart like Christ was, to give me the type of thoughts that Jesus had in his mind when he walked on this earth, to give me the type of dreams that Jesus had. I used to pray a little prayer, Lord, let my very dreams be found about thy business on some holy ground.

Because I know in my unconverted days, my dreams are the very opposite of that. And you know that dreams are a very good indication of what we believe and value deep down in our subconscious. You can fool people about what your values are, but you can't fool your subconscious.

If you love money, that's your main pursuit in life. You can fool everybody around you that you're a very generous person, but you can't fool your subconscious. The subconscious knows you're a very greedy, selfish person.

And it'll give you the type of dreams that you pursue after. And I said, Lord, I want my dreams about the kingdom of God. Then I know that I'm deeply, deep within, that I've really changed, that your Holy Spirit's done a work in me.

I'm not bothered what other people think about me because they don't even know 10% of my life. Don't care one bit, my brothers and sisters, what other people think about you. Actually, they know only 1% of your life.

What would you think of a teacher marking an answer paper and giving marks to the student after just correcting one question out of 10? You'd say, hey, don't value that paper just on the basis of one question. Look through them. See what his answers are for all 10 questions.

That's sensible. Why do you place value on somebody who knows only 10% about your life? You think his marks are worth anything? Even if he gives you 100%, he gave you 100% for the one part which he can see. And nine parts of your life is the devil and God can see, which may be very different.

Live before God's face. The mark of God's blessing is that you're becoming more Christ-like every year. Not how much your bank account increases.

I remember once a brother told me in India, brother, God's blessed my children. I said, really? You mean they're becoming more Christ-like? He says, no, they got a job in Dubai. Oh, well, back to the old covenant again.

What's the mark of God? I have four sons. I'll tell you exactly what I long for. God is my witness.

My wife and I, this is what I prayed for them when they were small. This is what I pray for them now. Lord, make them like Christ.

Everything else is secondary. I've told them that and that's why I pray for them. That's what I sincerely long for them.

And I praise God that they've chosen that way themselves, all four of them. And I pray that they would marry God-caring people who would also want to be like Christ. By God's grace, that's being fulfilled too.

And now I pray for the grandchildren and they will grow up to be Christ-like and live for Christ because we want the blessing of God to go from one generation to another, to another, and never to cease till Christ comes again. Dear brothers and sisters, that's why God gives you children so that you can give them those values in your generation. They will pass it on to that generation and they will pass it on to the next.

That's how he taught the Israelites. Tell your children how your ancestors were delivered from Egypt. We need to instruct our children as to what is the mark of God's blessing.

It's not money. If it's money, they get money, that's a bonus God throws in. That's not the mark of the greatest mark of God's blessing.

Jesus said, seek the kingdom of God first and his righteousness and these other things will be added to you. Very well known verse, the kingdom of God, the things of heaven, spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. Lord, make me more like Christ in my life.

That is my destination. Pre-destination means destination already determined. It's like when you take a flight, you get a ticket and the ticket says your destination, Cochin or Bangalore or Bombay or whatever it is.

You're predestined to go there before you get to the airport. Then when you go to the airport, you don't look for the biggest jumbo jet. You just say, which is the flight going to my place? Maybe Air India Express.

Not so exciting in some of the other airlines, but that's taking me to my destination. That's where I'm going. You need to listen to a word that leads you to your destination.

What type of messages do you listen to on the internet? I hope there are messages that help you to lead you to the destination. Don't look for a church that's big. Don't look for a preacher that's famous.

That's like looking for the jumbo jet irrespective of where it's going. That's a big plane. Let me get into it.

That's stupid. You need to see what your destination is and get into the flight that's going in that destination. You know you're on the right flight if progressively as you see on that map in the plane, you're getting closer and closer to where your destination is to be.

It's like a train. There are lots of trains in our railway station, but you've got a ticket. You say, I have to go to Delhi, then I look for the train that's going to Delhi.

I don't take a green train because of my favorite color or something. I take the train that's going to my destination. Whatever messages do you like to listen to? Are they messages that are leading you to your destination to become more like Christ? If you are serious about the Christian life, that is it.

Now you may say, well, what about serving the Lord? Of course. Did anybody serve the Lord like Jesus Christ? Did anybody serve the Father like Christ? Was there a man who walked on the There are times when it says he didn't even have enough time to eat and drink. He had no place to lay his head.

He had no time to earn money. So becoming like Christ is not just sitting at home like in some monastery and trying to become spiritual. It's as you grow in Christ-likeness and character and humility and love and purity and goodness and righteousness that will overflow.

Ministry is the overflow from my heart to bless other people. So becoming like Christ in life and in ministry, that's God's will for us. So that when you come to the end of your life and one day you stand before the Lord, you'll say, well done, good and faithful servant.

That's better than any Bharat Ratna or any award that you can get better than the Nobel Prize. I'm not interested in any of these earthly rewards. I want my Lord to say to me when I get there, well done, my good and faithful servant.

You were misunderstood. You were criticized. You suffered.

You went through many things, but you stood true to me. You want to hear those words or do you want to just go to heaven? What does the Lord say to you when you see him? Well, you made it, did you? I didn't think you would. Is that what he's going to say to you? I mean, that's what I say to some people.

I didn't think you'd make it, but he did. I don't want to hear those words. I want to hear well done, good and faithful servant.

All the awards and honors of earth will fade into insignificance in the light of those words. Every trial you went through, every place you denied yourself and lived for God, you will discover in that day, like we sing in that song, it'll be worth it all when we see Jesus. It'll be worth it all.

One look from his face, one word from his mouth, and all the sufferings of earth will just vanish like that. It'll be worth it all. It'll be worth it all, my brothers and sisters.

Be faithful, be truthful in your life, be upright. Don't be like the other people around and don't think that prosperity is the mark of God's blessing. I've heard our Muslim friends tell us, tell me, Allah is the true God because he's given us all the oil and that's made us wealthy.

Can you compare people of any religion who are as rich as our sheikhs? People from all over the world come to our country begging for blessings. Allah has blessed our country. In India, there are rich businessmen who worship Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.

They go regularly to the temple, build temples for Lakshmi and all that. And we have a couple of Indians who are in the top 10 richest people in the world now. You know what they say? Lakshmi is the true God.

Look how he's blessed us with such fantastic wealth, put us in the top 10 in the world. Then there are Christian preachers who say, Jesus is the true God. He can make you wealthy too.

So we have Allah making people wealthy, Lakshmi people making wealthy, and Jesus making people wealthy. And it looks as if Allah and Lakshmi are doing a better job than Jesus. Be honest.

If that is the mark of God's blessing, you have to say that Allah and Lakshmi are doing a much better job than this Jesus, whoever he is. That to me is the clearest proof that this is a hoax. This health wealth gospel.

Who has Jesus put into the top 10 in the world? You say health? You look up the Guinness Book records. The longest living people are not born again believers. They're usually somebody in Afghanistan or Japan or somebody who lived up to 130 years.

Are you fooling yourself? Are you living in Deuteronomy 28 instead of Romans 8, 29? He who has years to hear, let him hear. I love you. That's why I spoke the truth.

That's what I've sought to pursue ever since God opened my eyes many years ago. Let's pray. Let's bow our heads before God.

Thank you, Father, that you have given us education so that we can read the Bible in our own language. That we don't have to be ignorant. We have no excuse for our ignorance.

You've given us the Bible in our own language. You've shown us what the truth is. And we know our nature pulls us in another direction.

Our nature pulls us to pursue after earthly blessings when you have promised us things that are a million times better. And along with that, to provide us all our earthly needs as well. Help us to be wise.

Help us not to miss out on our inheritance. The devil's blinded many of your people for so long. I pray that the scales will fall from their eyes and they'll be able to see what Christ purchased for us through his death and resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Thank you, Father, for this church and for everybody here. I pray that they will really know the blessing of the Lord, every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Commit them to you in Jesus' name.

Amen. Thank you for listening.

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