

The Principle of Jesus' Life

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of walking as Jesus walked, focusing on the distinction between condemnation and conviction. It highlights the need to listen to God's voice, believe in the possibility of change, and trust in God's patient guidance to overcome struggles and fulfill His purpose in our lives.

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Scripture: John 8:32, 1 John 2:6, Acts 17:30, John 3:17, 1 Corinthians 4:15, Matthew 13:58, Hebrews 8:11, Isaiah 50:4

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Description

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Transcript

Brothers and sisters, I'm happy to be here. What was the main lesson that God wanted to teach man by sending Jesus to this earth? For many people, it is only the fact that he came to die for our sins and restore us in fellowship with God. That's how what I thought also for many years.

Jesus said, you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free. So the less truth that we know, the less we experience freedom. The more truth we know, the more experience freedom.

And I've discovered through the years that it was not just to die for our sins that Jesus came. He came to show us how God wants man to live. And I want to read a verse in 1 John chapter 2. I would say that most Christians do not take this word seriously because they feel it is impossible to obey.

1 John chapter 2 and verse 6, the one who says he abides in Christ ought to walk in the same manner as he walked. Or the Living Bible says anyone who says he's a Christian must live as Christ lived. Now, I don't know if you take that word seriously.

Is it really possible, first of all? The moment I read a word like that, the devil is quick to say that's impossible. Nobody can live like Jesus lived. If that is the case, then we have to say that God has written something which is not true.

There's something in your Bible which is not true. But I don't think any of us would have the boldness to say that. I must say that after I was born again, for many, many years, I never took that word seriously.

That's why my life was substandard, defeated. I did not know God as I should. But when I took that word seriously and said, Lord, if you have written that in your word, it must be possible.

And I want to see how I can live as your word says. Now, this does not mean perfection. We need to distinguish the things that differ.

To walk as Jesus walked is not the same as becoming completely like him. These are two distinct things. So, in chapter 3 of 1 John, we read in verse 2, when he appears, we will be like him.

So, we're not going to be like him until he appears a second time. That is in the future. But we can walk like him now.

Do you understand the distinction between these two? It's important to know that. Because most Christians, this is how it was with me, we say, well, I'm only going to be like Jesus when he comes. So, until then, I'm just going to be defeated by sin because I'm not like him.

I will not be like him till he comes. And that's all I knew, 1 John 3, 2, that when he comes, I'll be like him. And we're not going to be like him till he comes.

So, I'm just going to keep waiting till he comes and then I'll be like him. But there's a lot of difference between being like him and walking as he walked. And this 1 John 2, 6 is for us to obey now.

1 John 3, 2 is in the future. The difference is walking is a conscious act. We don't walk in our sleep.

Walking is not something you do unconsciously. It's a conscious act. Whereas becoming like him refers to our total personality, all our inner unconscious areas of our life, which is a major part of our life.

We'll be completely like him when he comes. So, if God's purpose is to be fulfilled through your life, it is not enough that your sins are forgiven. It's not even enough that you're baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The whole purpose of God filling us with the Holy Spirit is to enable us to walk as he walked. So, that's what I want to try and explain to you. What does it mean to walk as Jesus walked? Walking is a conscious act.

I take one step and another step and another step. I'm consciously walking. So, to look at the way Jesus lived his earthly life, it may surprise us to see how he lived.

Let me turn you to John chapter 5. Since I presume most of you are born again, I don't want to talk about the first step of salvation, which is repentance and receiving Christ as our savior. We don't even begin the Christian life. That's when we are born again and we become a child of God.

I'm talking about after that, to walk as he walked. John's gospel chapter 5 and verse 19. Now, this may be new to most of you.

So, if you listen carefully, I believe it will help you to learn something that can change your whole life. John 5.19, Jesus said in the middle of that verse, the son can do nothing of himself unless it is something he sees the father doing. So, Jesus was always listening to what the father had to say to him.

He was constantly, it was not a conscious, you know, he did all his other work as a carpenter or he was traveling around, but within there was a year that was always open. What does the father want me to do?

And we can say that Jesus was in one sense, like a little child, depending on his father, all the time. You know, Jesus said in Matthew chapter 18, that the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is a child.

Matthew 18.4, whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And we know that Jesus is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. If you put the two together, you'll find that the way Jesus lived on earth was just like a little child.

A little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. So, in other words, when Jesus sought to live on this earth, he lived in relation to his father as a little child who was just listening to the father all the time. And once I discovered the secret, I have to tell you, my life changed completely.

To overcome sin, habits that enslaved me for years, became easy. And to understand what God wanted me to do, where he wanted me to go, became much easier. So that we accomplished all that God has planned for us in our life.

So, Jesus, let me use an illustration. It's like a two-year-old child holding the hand of his father and going wherever his father wanted him to go. This is how Jesus lived.

His life was so simple. All he had to do was respond to the promptings of his father. I want to say to you, that is how God wants every one of his children to live.

When God put two trees in the garden of Eden, what he was trying to tell Adam was, you can have a choice now, two ways to live. One is, you get this knowledge of good and evil within yourself. And then you don't have to refer to God for everything, because you have that knowledge of good and evil yourself, and you can choose what to do and what not to do.

This is how most human beings live. And this is how, unfortunately, most Christians live. But Jesus, the Lord told Adam that if you choose not to live by that tree, you'll die.

But the other tree, which is called the tree of life, was another way of life. And that is where you did not live by your own understanding of what is good and evil. But you chose to live by the life of God within, prompting you to do what is right.

There's two completely different ways of life. One is by our own cleverness and ability, which is the way even most Christians live. I think I know what to do.

I don't need to wait on God. I don't need to hear what he has to say. And that's the way of death.

And that is the reason for a lot of confusion and a lot of defeat and discouragement. And many of the commands in scripture, we find we are unable to obey just because of this reason. But if you learn the secret of living like Jesus, depending on the life of God within us, prompting us all the time, in every situation, what to do, how to react.

It's another way of life. This is the whole purpose of being filled with the Holy Spirit. I feel this whole teaching about being filled with the Spirit has been so, you know, pushed into another direction that has confused a lot of Christians.

Because it's been centered around supernatural gifts. Now I believe in supernatural gifts. And we need to experience that if that is our calling.

But the primary purpose of being filled with the Holy Spirit is to have the life of God within us, which prompts us to do or not to do in different situations. Listening to the voice of the Spirit all the time. I want to show you a verse in Isaiah 50 verse 4, which is a prophecy about Jesus Christ, related to what I'm just saying.

Isaiah 50 verse 4, whenever Jesus woke up in the morning, the Father woke him up in the morning, and he woke up his inner ear to listen. This is the way we are supposed to live. Every time we wake up in the morning, Isaiah 50 verse 4, he says in the middle of that verse, he wakens me morning by morning to listen as a disciple.

And it's not just that having a little quiet time in the morning like many people have. Every time he woke in the morning throughout the day, his ear was open to hear what does the Father want me to do. And when he was not very sure, he'd go and spend a little time in prayer so that he could be sure what the Father wanted him to do.

And the other result of it was that when he had heard the Father, if he came across anybody during the day who was in need, he always had a word for him. Because it says here, the Lord God, in verse 4, the same verse, has given me a tongue to speak a word to sustain this weary person. So here he was, always listening, always listening so he knew what to do and what not to do.

And if somebody came along who had a need which Jesus didn't even know, the Father would prompt him to have a word for that person. Just imagine if all of us lived like this. The amount of blessing that you could be to other people in the world is unimaginable.

And it's possible for every single one of us. I believe the devil has deceived Christians into thinking this is only for some special category of Christian. It's not true.

For every single Christian, I want you to brothers and sisters to believe this, that it is God's will for you to live such a spirit-filled life, that you can actually hear God prompting you in your heart, telling you what to do. And when you come to a fork in the road, which one to take? That is God's will for you. It's our birthright.

And to have a word to sustain every single person who comes to us, whom we encounter during the day, who are in need. In fact, that is the message in the first page of the Bible. The message in the first page of the Bible is that God spoke something on the first day, and he spoke something on the second day, and he spoke something on the third day.

Every day he was speaking. That's the message in the first book of the Bible. And that is to teach us one lesson that God speaks every day.

And you may not hear what God is saying. That's because our ears have become deaf to his voice, but God is speaking every single day. From the time I was born again, God wanted to speak to me every single day.

But I'm sorry to say I did not have the patience or the time to listen to him every day, and I believe I wasted a lot of my life. But a time came in my life when I really woke up, and I said, Lord, this is not the way I'm supposed to live. I can end up finally standing before your judgment seat one day and discover that I wasted a major part of my life, because I didn't hear what you had to say.

I didn't live by the tree of life. I lived by the tree of knowledge of good and evil. I say, I know I'm intelligent.

I read the Bible, and I know what to do. But that's not the way we're supposed to live. We're supposed to live by the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Now, in the Old Testament, that was not possible. The Old Testament, only some prophet or something could hear the voice of God, and the others had to go to the prophet to find out what God had to say. This is one of the big differences that happened on the day of Pentecost, when God established a new covenant.

My dear brothers and sisters, I hope you will be gripped by this, because in this new covenant, one of the promises is in Hebrews chapter 8, Hebrews 8 and verse 11, they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen and everyone his brother, saying, know the Lord, all will know me from the least to the greatest of them. In the old covenant, you had to go to somebody to teach you what the Lord's will is for your life. In the new covenant, it says everyone can know me personally.

You don't need somebody to teach you what's God's will for your life. That is the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus lived by the prompting of the Holy Spirit all the time, and that's why he would sometimes go alone somewhere to pray.

See, many people, their understanding of prayer is, and when you go to God, you tell him a lot of things. That's not what Jesus is doing. Jesus did not pray the way most Christians pray today.

The way I prayed changed completely when I understood how Jesus walked, because before that, when I went to God in prayer, I was just telling him a lot of things. I need this, and I need that, and I'm praying for this person, that person, the other person. But I discovered that Jesus, when he went to pray, he was not talking so much.

He was listening more than talking. Like we read here in Isaiah 50, the Lord God has given me a year to listen. So if Jesus spent two hours with the Father somewhere, I think he must have spoken for five minutes.

Have you ever spent two hours with God and spoken only for five minutes? I find that there's the most profitable way for me to pray. It's like, you know, to let you use an illustration. Supposing you're sitting with a very godly man who's got a tremendous experience of God.

You would not want to talk to him much. You'd want to listen, say, hey brother, tell me more about your experience with God. And I would listen, listen, listen.

If I spent one hour with him, I'd probably speak five minutes and listen for 55 minutes, because he has so much to say to me. Now if I'm speaking to a young person, then I'd probably speak for 55 minutes and let him speak for five minutes. But if I'm speaking to a much more godly person, I would listen more, definitely.

So imagine if I'm sitting with God Almighty. That's what prayer is. Should I be listening or talking? If I spend one hour with God, should I be speaking for 55 minutes? No.

I should be quiet for 55 minutes. Speak for just five minutes, because what is there that I can inform God which he doesn't know? Is there anything that he doesn't know which I can tell him? Is there any burden

which I have which he doesn't have? Is there anybody I love more than he loves? Is there anybody I care for more than he cares for? I really believe that many Christians have not understood how to pray the way Jesus prayed. That's part of walking as he walked.

It was listening, like we read in Isaiah 50. The inner ear was open to listen, and that's why Jesus accomplished so much in 33 and a half years that he could say at the end of his life, I finished the work you gave me to do. I changed my life also completely, because then I realized that I could go where the Lord wanted me to go and do the work God wanted me to do and leave a lot of other things untouched.

I don't need to do that because God hasn't called me to do that. You know, Jesus never went to Africa or China or Rome or any place. He's most of the time only in Israel, and yet he finished the work the Father gave him to do.

Many of us have the idea that to serve God means I go here, to go there, and a lot of preachers boast about the number of countries they've traveled to. That doesn't mean they've accomplished God's will. You can travel to 70 countries in the world and not accomplish God's will.

It's just because you have money and you can travel here and there. Another person who doesn't have the opportunity to travel like that say, oh, I'm feeling I'm not doing much for the Lord. It's not quantity.

It's a question of listening. What has God wanted you to do? And when you look at Jesus' life, quantity-wise, 90% of his life he was a carpenter. He wasn't preaching for 30 years.

It looks like a tremendous waste of time. And he preached only for three and a half years, and he never went outside the nation of Israel. What does it mean to learn to walk as Jesus walked? Not doing so many things, traveling so many countries, and preaching thousands of sermons.

No. It's doing what the Father wants you to do. And those who do that are the ones who will discover at the end of their life that they can say to the Father, Father, I didn't travel here and there, but I finished the work you gave me to do.

You sent me to earth with a particular task, and I finished it. This is the joy I have today. As I get older and older, I know that I'm doing what God wants me to do.

I don't have any lust to travel here or travel over there. I want to finish what God wants me to do. I hope I will be able to get all of you to be gripped by this one thing that before you end your earthly life, you must finish what God sent you on this earth to do.

Otherwise, you can do 101 things you can think you're doing for God, and I want to tell you you'll discover when Christ comes again that you wasted your life, and I want to save you from that. Let me turn you to Psalm 139. It's a very interesting verse in Psalm 139.

Psalm 139, it tells us here that before you were born in your mother's womb, God planned your life. How many of you believe that? I hope you do. It was wonderful for me to realize that way back, I'm nearly 79 now, that way back in my mother's womb in 1939, when I was in my mother's womb, before I came out of my mother's womb, my heavenly father knew that one day I would be born again, and he planned every single day of my life from there till whenever my life is supposed to end, which I don't know when it is.

Turn to Psalm 139. It says here in verse 13, you formed my inward parts, and you wove me in my mother's womb, and here is the verse I'm thinking of, verse 16. One Psalm 139, verse 16, your eyes have seen my unformed substance, and in your book that is in God's mind was written, what was written? All the days that were ordained for me, before there was even one of them, before my first day on earth, God had already planned, I'm talking about myself, every day that was ordained for me, what I was supposed to do, where I was supposed to go, I don't know whether you believe that, when there was not even one of them, before I'd even started the first day.

It was like that with Jesus. His whole life was planned out before he came to earth, where he was to be born, and what he was supposed to do each day of his life, and in God's plan, Jesus was not supposed to go to Rome, he was not supposed to go to Africa, he was not supposed to go to China, and up to the age of 30, in God's plan, he was to be a carpenter. And because Jesus lived every day, listening, listening, like I read in Isaiah 50, he could do what God wanted him to do, and when he came to the end of his life, see what he said in John 17, John 17, when Jesus came to the end of his life, the last day, when he was sitting with the disciples in the day of the last supper, before he went to the cross, in his prayer to the Father, he said these words in John 17, and verse 4, Father, I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do, to walk as Jesus walked.

That's the verse I quoted in the beginning. This is what it means to walk as Jesus walked, to believe that just like God had planned the life of Jesus every day, he's planned your life, every day, and when you come to the end of your life, you should be able to look up to heaven and say, Father, I finished the work you gave me to do. How much money I earned counts for nothing.

How many countries I traveled counts for nothing. Jesus, one country, that's all. How much money did Jesus earn? Very little.

How many years was he a full-time worker? Three and a half years, that's all. Very little. Humanly speaking, it's not very impressive that a man spent 30 years as a carpenter.

Three and a half years he preached and traveled here and there, and he traveled only one country. I mean, if there's some preacher like that today, you wouldn't be very impressed by a preacher who spent only three and a half years in ministry and traveled only in one country. But Jesus said, I finished the work you gave me to do.

He knew exactly what he was supposed to do each day, and he finished it, and he says, I've glorified you on earth. Many of us pray, Lord, I want to glorify you on this earth. If you really mean it, this is the way to do it.

You have to develop the habit of listening, and I'll tell you, the devil will try every possible means to keep you so busy that you won't have time to listen to God. And if he succeeded there, even if you don't commit some grievous sin, and you glory in the fact that I don't watch dirty movies, and I'm living a fairly clean life, and I go regularly to the meetings, and do all the things that Christians are supposed to do, and I give some money for God's work, you can satisfy yourself with all these things. I want to say to you, my dear brothers and sisters, when you stand before the Lord, you will regret.

One of the greatest things I have prayed for my own life is, Lord, when I stand before you one day, I don't want to have a regret that I did not live the way you wanted me to live. I don't want to stand before you, and my testimony is, I went to church regularly, and I did this, and I gave money for your work, and I did all

this activity. No, I want to be able to stand before the Lord when I, the final day, and say, Lord, my father, the work you planned for me to do before my mother's, I was born, I finished it.

Maybe I didn't travel as much as other people, may I be, I didn't do the things other people did, but I finished the work you gave me to do. This is what it means to walk as Jesus walked, and I want to say to you, brothers and sisters, that is the greatest thing you can do for the Lord. It's the greatest thing you can ever do, and if you don't think like that, you're going to change your way of thinking, and say, Lord, this is what you called me on earth to do, and there's no competition here.

It's not a question of being a great preacher. If God has not called you to be a preacher, you can still accomplish God's will for your life, and stand before the Lord with great joy, because you finished what God has called you to do, but it will mean you have to change your complete way of thinking, because the normal way of thinking, most people is going to do a lot of things for God, do this and do that. It's quantity of work, and you know, Christian organizations are always boasting about the number of things they do for God.

If you examine Jesus' life, there was very little in terms of what he accomplished, and how many people did he gather together at the end of his life? Eleven wholehearted disciples, and even on the day of Pentecost, after three and a half years of ministry, only 120 people met to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but with those 11 people, think of this, Jesus selected 11 people, and those 11 people, he changed the course of this world for 2,000 years. That's with those 11 people. I was so gripped by that, I said, Lord, in my life, if I can not just gather a big church of hundreds of people, I'm not interested in that.

If I can get 11 people like that, who can change the course of history, I want to finish the work you gave me to do. I want to do a work of quality. I want to finish the work you gave me to do.

I hope all of you will be gripped by this one passion. This is what it means to walk as Jesus walked. It's not that I walk in perfection, because as I said, none of us will be perfect until Christ comes again.

But if you can develop this habit of listening, listening, Lord, what do you want me to do? You remember the story of Jesus going to the house of Mary and Martha? It's the same lesson that he taught them there. As soon as he went to the house, quite rightly, Martha was very eager to provide a good meal. You know, some very honored guest comes to your house, you immediately think of making a good meal for him.

And it was a very good thought that Martha had going to the kitchen and work hard. And Mary did not help Martha in the kitchen, because Jesus was speaking. His disciples were there, and they were all sitting down, and Jesus was speaking, and Mary was sitting there with those disciples listening.

That's what we read in Luke chapter 10. Martha welcomed Jesus into the home, verse 38 and verse 39. She had a sister, Luke 10, 39, a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet, listening to his word.

But Martha went into the kitchen, and she was always preparing something for the Lord to eat, and for his disciples. Isn't that a good work, to do something for the Lord? Prepare something for the Lord and his disciples, a very good work. And she was sitting there, and she was so disturbed in her heart by what, the fact that Mary was not coming to help her.

And so she comes to the Lord and complains about Mary, saying, Lord, don't you care that this sister of mine has not left me alone, not to do all the serving alone? And she thought that Jesus would tell Mary to get up and go and help Martha. But that's not what the Lord did. The Lord rebuked Martha, and said,

Martha, you're worried about so many things.

What you're doing is not bad. You're not committing some sin, but that's not what I want you to do. Mary has chosen that one thing which is necessary.

I remember when I was a young Christian, and I was seeking to know what God wanted me to do. The Lord spoke this word to my heart, Luke 10, 42. One thing is necessary.

One thing is necessary, and that's what Mary has chosen. And the Lord spoke to my heart, this is the most important thing you need in your life, to listen to my word and do that. And Martha was doing service for the Lord.

I learned that day that serving the Lord and doing so many things for him is not as important as sitting at his feet and listening to his word. And I discovered now through the years, I've been serving the Lord for more than 50 years. And like everyone else, I want to know at the end of my life that I have done something useful for God's kingdom before I leave this earth.

But it won't be if I did what I wanted to do, like Martha, go here, go there, do whatever I wanted to do. And there are a lot of people like that, you know, they've planned so many things, I'm going to do this, and I'm going to do that, I'm going to do this for the Lord. When they have a vacation, they say, when I take a vacation, I'll go to India, and I'll go here and there and do so many things for God.

That may not be what God wants you to do. The most important thing about a servant is that he does exactly what his master tells him to do. Not just goes around doing whatever he wants.

We have a completely wrong idea of what it means to serve the Lord. I'm sorry to say that. But that is true.

Many, many, probably many of you sitting here, you think to serve the Lord means you go and do something or the other for the Lord. That is not what God wants you to do. You remember the Lord's prayer.

What did he teach us to pray? Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, and then thy will be done as it is in heaven. Very important statement. Lord, I want to do your will as it is done in heaven.

So then I begin to stop for a moment and think, how is God's will done in heaven? The angels don't go running around here and there doing something or the other for the Lord and Michael and Gabriel and not chasing the other angels. Come on, go and do something for God. Don't just hang around doing nothing.

That's not what they do. You know what the angels in heaven do? They wait before the Father. And the Father tells them, do this, do that.

You tell Gabriel, I want you to go down to Nazareth and speak to that girl, Mary. I want you to go down and speak to that priest, Zachariah. He goes, finishes that, comes back and waits before the Father.

What next, Father? They don't run around doing something or the other for God. No. They wait on God.

When God tells them something, they go and do that and come back and wait on Him. That is how God's will is done in heaven. And Jesus taught us to pray every day, Thy will be done in my life as it is done in heaven.

But I'm sorry to say I never discovered that for many, many years in my Christian life. When God filled me with the Holy Spirit, this is one of the things I learned, not to run around and do this and that and the other for God and discover at the end of my life that I wasted my life. I mean, I may have been free from sin, but I didn't finish God's work.

There's a particular task that God planned for me before I was born. And if I don't do that, and I come to the end of my life and I've not finished that work, even if I've done 101 other good things, I will stand before the Lord and say, Lord, I'm sorry I didn't do the work you appointed for me. Is that possible for some of you? See God seriously.

We've all made mistakes in our life. And God overlooks that. It's a wonderful thing.

I used to think, what if I made a messed up so many years of my life? And now only I'm discovering this wonderful truth that I have to listen and fulfill God's plan for my life. What about all these years I wasted? Then I see the example of the Apostle Paul, who wasted 30 years of his life doing all the wrong things. What wrong things? He was killing Christians and persecuting them.

You'd think that such a person can never fulfill God's plan for his life because he lived up to the age of 67. And 30 years of those 67 years, he just persecuted Christians and did everything outside the will of God. Supposing a man's lived half his life outside the will of God, doing whatever he felt like.

Now he repents and comes to the Lord. Is it possible for him still to fulfill God's plan for his life? Yes. That's the message of hope that came to me because so many years I didn't think seriously about what God's plan for my life was.

I was just trying to do something or the other for God. Paul's life encouraged me. Some of you who may be hearing for the first time today that God's got a particular plan for your life that he wants to fulfill.

And you say, well, Lord, I never thought that all these years. I did so many other things. And the Lord says, don't worry.

If you take it seriously, even today, you can fulfill my plan for your life. Because when Paul came to the end of his life, you know what he said in 2 Timothy 4? In 2 Timothy, in chapter 4, he said, 2 Timothy 4, 7, I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course and I've kept the faith.

That's the same word Jesus said. Father, I've glorified you on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. The difference is Jesus did that from day one, all his 33 and a half years.

Paul started the age of 30. Half his life was over. He died when he was 67.

So, he had only 37 years. And most of his life, he didn't do what God wanted him to do. But still, he finished his course.

How is that? This really puzzled me. How is it possible that a man just lives in sin and disobeys God for 30 years of his life? And then still, when he comes to the end of his life, he says, I've finished my course. The reason is because, let me explain this to you, that God in his foreknowledge, you know, the foreknowledge is a great truth of God that you need to understand.

God sees the end from the beginning. That means God looked at Paul's life. He knew when he was going to be born.

And he knew this guy would live in rebellion for 20-30 years. But he knew that one day on Damascus road, he would yield his life to God and become a true Christian. So, God planned in such a way.

He overlooked all the past and said, okay, from that day onwards, I can make him still fulfill my plan for his life. Because there's a verse in Acts 17, Acts 17, which is a very liberating verse, if you understand it. And I'm sure Paul said that from his own experience.

In Acts 17, verse 30. Listen to this. I have shared this verse with many people who made a mess of their life for many years and encourage them to know that, brother, it doesn't matter.

If you take it seriously now, God can still fulfill his purpose through your life. Acts 17, verse 30 says, God overlooks the times of ignorance. What is the time of ignorance? The time of ignorance is where you don't know that you're supposed to walk as Jesus walked.

And nobody told you that. You went to some church where they just told you, you've got to get your sins forgiven and you go to heaven when you die. That's it.

You are ignorant that God's got a lot more than just forgiving your sins and taking you to heaven when you die. He wants you to walk as Jesus walked. You didn't know that.

You were ignorant. Okay, God says, I overlook the times of ignorance. Maybe some of you have been ignorant until today.

Those of you are really taking seriously what I'm saying right now, even if you don't understand it all. Are you getting a little inkling, a little understanding of this glorious truth that God's got a specific plan for your life and you wonder, boy, I wish I'd known this 20 years ago. Never mind.

Thank God you know it today. You say, what about my past life? Here's the verse. God overlooks your times of ignorance.

And he says, from today onwards. Repent means turn around. Turn around to accept God's will for your life from today onwards.

So that's how it was in Paul's life that even though 50% of his life he had wasted, the remaining 50% he could come to the end of his life and say, I finished the work you gave me to do. Like I said, because God in his foreknowledge knew that this person is going to not know the truth for 30 years and will know the truth only after the next 37 years. And God says, okay, then I'll accomplish my purpose in those 37 years.

So God's word is always encouraging. It's never discouraging. That's one principle you must remember.

If ever you hear a word from a preacher that discourages you or makes you feel condemned, that is not from God. Make it a rule in your life. A word, even if it's a word that is from scripture, but it condemns you.

It's not from God. Make it a rule in your life. I have refused to accept any word that I hear which condemns me because I'll tell you why.

John 3.17. Very important verse. Everybody knows John 3.16. You know John 3.16? God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should never perish but have everlasting life. What is the next verse? Very important verse.

God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world. It's as important as John 3.16. John 3.17. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved. So condemnation is not, the word judge means the same as condemnation.

God did not send his son into the world, the King James Version says, to condemn the world. So Jesus Christ did not come to condemn. So if you hear a word either that comes to your mind or you listen from a preacher and it condemns you, say to yourself immediately, that's not from God.

I'm not going to accept it. I'm not going to listen to it because God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world. But you mean the Holy Spirit doesn't show us what's wrong? Of course he does.

He convicts us. There's a lot of difference between being convicted and being condemned. Condemned makes me feel hopeless.

Conviction is different. The Holy Spirit has been sent by God to convict us and it's very important that all of you distinguish between being condemned and being convicted. I didn't know that.

I'm sorry to say that for so many years I went to churches and they never told me how to distinguish between the voice of condemnation and the voice of conviction. I wish somebody had told me that when I was first converted. I had to discover these things myself.

The result was so many years of my life I just drifted around trying to... I was frequently discouraged and frequently gloomy because I felt condemned by so many things. I listen to a message and I feel condemned. Okay, I'll explain to you what it means.

Let me use an example of an earthly father and his child does something wrong. I'm trying to explain how God treats us. So supposing that earthly father tells his son, listen that's not the way to do it you stupid fellow.

You know some fathers do speak like that. How many times I've told you that's not the way to do it. Nothing good will come out of you.

You never do anything I say. You always do it wrong and you mess up and look what you messed up. You've broken all this and you never seem to learn.

That is condemnation. Earthly fathers may talk like that. God never talks like that.

Even if you have made the biggest mess of your life, he won't say that. Conviction is different. That's how a good father speaks.

He says, listen my son, that's not the way to do it. Listen my girl, that's not the way to do it. You did it wrong but never mind.

I'll help you to set it right and you can still do it right. I'll show you how to do it. Don't get discouraged.

You can still make it. That is the voice of conviction. It's always got a hope in it.

It's the difference between a school teacher and a father, a good father. You know Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4, he says, I'm not a teacher. I'm your father.

1 Corinthians 4 verse 4-15. You can have 10,000 teachers but you don't have many fathers. I became your father through the gospel.

Paul is saying to them, one father like me is better than 10,000 teachers. So he's distinguishing between a teacher and a father and he's saying, I'm verse 14, I'm not saying these things to shame you but to correct you. That's the difference in condemnation and conviction.

I'm not saying it to shame you but to convict you as my beloved children. Okay, the distinction between a teacher and a father. Let me give you an example.

Here's a 10-year-old boy in a class, mathematics teacher. He's not able to understand some problem, maybe long division or square root or something. He's trying to learn how to do square root and he just can't understand.

And all the others in the class have understood but this poor boy is still trying to figure out how to work out a square root of a number. And finally the teacher gets fed up after trying for a few days and say, listen, you're useless, man. You don't hold up the progress of the whole class.

You better get out of the school and go and join some other school. I can't waste time with you. I'm going to go on with teaching the other children.

And that poor 10-year-old boy walks out of the class and goes home weeping. And he meets his dad and says, what happened, son? He says, dad, I can't figure out how to find out square root, something my teacher was trying to teach me. And he said, I'm useless.

He told me to get out of the class. And the dad says, don't worry, my son. I'll teach you.

And he sits with him and patiently explains to him. This is the way to do it. And at the end of the day, the son says, dad, I still can't understand.

He says, son, don't worry. We'll continue tomorrow. Next day, the father comes back from work.

He says, come, son, I'll teach you again. Again, he explains to him, explains to him. He says, dad, I can't seem to get it.

Don't worry, son. Tomorrow's another day. We can start again tomorrow and see.

And that father works with his son. And he gets it. And then he says, dad, now I understand.

That excites him so much that he goes on to learn more and more and maybe becomes a mathematics professor one day. How did that happen? Because the father was patient to teach. Teachers are not like that.

And I want to tell you, God is a father. And when he sees that you've done something wrong, he's not going to kick you out of the class and say, go get out. I've got other children I've got to take care of.

No. He's patient. He says, I'll work with you till you learn it.

Are you still having a problem with your anger? You know, it's like trying to work out square root, overcoming anger. Your problem is not square root. Your problem is not multiplication.

Your problem is anger. And you've tried so many times and you fail. The teacher will say, you're useless, man.

Get out. You'll never get victory over anger. Have you heard the voice saying you'll never get victory? Have you heard a voice saying your father was angry, your grandfather was angry.

You remember how angry your mother used to be? You've got the same. You've got the same nature, man. You're just like that.

Condemnation, condemnation, and you give up. You say, no, I'll never get victory. I was a slave to anger.

I'll tell you. All human beings are. But the Lord delivered me 100 percent, not 99 percent.

Since a number of years, I was a slave to it and it's gone from my life. How did it happen? Because God was patient with me, worked with me, and it went from my life. I was enslaved to discouragement frequently.

Discouraged, discouraged, discouraged. It's gone from my life completely. Because my Heavenly Father sat with me and worked with me.

He's not a teacher. He's a servant. And I want to say to every one of you, I don't know what your besetting sin is, but whatever it is, I want to say to you in Jesus' name, that your Heavenly Father is saying to you, my son, my daughter, I want you to walk as Jesus walked.

And don't say you can't do it. Don't speak the word of unbelief. Speak the word of faith.

Lord, I believe it's possible even for a sinner like me to overcome this wretched habit which I'm having. Maybe some of you got this evil habit of watching pornography in secret, destroying your mind. And the devil says to you, are you a child of God? Watching pornography? Don't you know you're walking straight into my lap into hell? And yet you struggle to give it up and you can't give it up? Just like that little boy couldn't understand square root.

And the devil says there's no hope for you. You've tried so many times and you can't give it up and you keep enslaved to it. And he says to some of you, you're a married man and you're doing all this in secret.

You call yourself a Christian and you feel more and more condemned, condemned, condemned, but you can't get victory. I want to say to you, your Heavenly Father can help you. He'll sit with you and work with you till you are completely overcome that habit.

There is absolutely nothing that God cannot help you to overcome. Believe him today and say, Lord, if your word says that I'm to walk as Jesus walked, I can walk as Jesus walked. But you must God, you know, God's not going to force you.

He doesn't make you into a robot. You know, robots are, they're programmed to never do the wrong thing. It's a computer program inside this robot.

Now, if God had made Adam, made of flesh and blood, but programmed inside like a robot with no choice of his own, I'll tell you what would have happened. Adam would have walked up to the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the program inside would have said, turn right, you would turn right, walk forward. Now you walk up to the tree of life, eat from there and you would eat from there.

Now go back to God and go back to God. He's not choosing anything. He's, the program is making him do that.

God did not want an Adam like that. And he doesn't want you to be like that either. You know, because Adam, that way Adam would never have sinned.

Look at the stars. They don't sin. For thousands of years, they've been just spinning exactly split second obedience to God.

They're like robots. But God doesn't want robots. Do you want children or robots in your home? Supposing you have a small robot, looks like a three-year-old child, and you come back home from work and that robot comes up, opens the door and says, hello, daddy.

I'm so happy to see you've come. What can I do for you? Do you find any happiness in that? Because it's programmed, you can program it to say anything. Daddy, I love you so much.

It's programmed to do it. What a difference there is when a three-year-old child hugs you and says, daddy, I love you. That's a million times more than a robot because it's come out of personal choice.

That's when God is waiting to make you out of personal choice. You can disobey if you want, but you don't. Say, Lord, I love you.

I want to please you. I want to tell you that is the reason why God has given us the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I want to encourage you to open your hearts and say, Lord, I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Not to speak in tongues. That's not the main thing. I speak in tongues.

I've spoken in tongues for 43 years, and it's a great blessing in my life, but that's not the main thing. No, it isn't. Speaking in tongues is my, when I'm speaking to God alone, it's a private love language that I use to speak to him.

God may give it to you. He may not give it to you, but the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to help us walk as Jesus walked. Definitely.

If God were to say to me, saying, see, Zach, I can give you a choice. Either the power to walk as Jesus walked or to speak in tongues. Which do you want? I say, Lord, any day to walk as Jesus walked.

Without a doubt. I don't care if I never speak in tongues for the rest of my life because I know this is greater, and I'll tell you why. Because Jesus never spoke in tongues.

The most spiritual man who walked on this earth was Jesus Christ, and he never spoke in tongues. He didn't need to. Speaking in tongues is a gift God gives because we are limited in our mind in this world because of the flesh and sin, and it helps us to overcome that limitation.

Jesus didn't have that limitation. That's why when we go to heaven, we'll never speak in tongues because all the limitations are gone. So the greatest thing is not to speak in tongues.

God gives it to you, take it. He gave it to me, I took it. But the greatest thing is to walk as Jesus walked.

I tell you that, and if you can somehow be gripped by this. I told you at the beginning of this message, why did God send his son to this earth? Not just to die for our sins, but to show us how God wants man to live.

Listening.

Every morning, he opened my ear to hear what he has to say, and I want to say to you in Jesus' name, to every one of you, no matter how much you have made a mess of your past life till today, God can pick you up today and sit with you like that father sat with his child who was kicked out of school and says, I'll work with you. I'll make a new man out of you. I'll make a new woman out of you.

That's the message of the gospel. Let's hope for every single person sitting here. I don't know about your past life, and I don't know what all wrong things you've done in your life, but I want to say to you today in Jesus' name, he can do a miracle for you and change you completely.

Believe him. Don't tie his hands by unbelief. Some of the saddest words written in the Bible is the last verse of Matthew 13.

Jesus could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief, but he can do great things if you will believe. You say, Lord, I believe that you will do something even with a wretched sinner like me. You will do something for me.

You will teach me to walk as Jesus walked. It may take a little time to learn it, but I'm going to learn it. Will you say that to God? We'll have a break and then continue.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, please help us. We don't want a single person going away from here discouraged, but gripped by the truth, the tremendous possibility that lies ahead of every single person here to do something useful for you on this earth before we leave.

Help us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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