

How God Prepares His Servants!

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Father, once again, O Lord, at Your feet, we just want to listen to one voice – Your voice. The words of man, let it fall to the ground. Every other word, let it be anointed, O Lord. Let it be backed up by the witness of the Spirit. Let it connect faith, O Lord Father. Let it penetrate, O Lord Father, to hit home, O Lord. I pray that, O Father, that Your Word, Father, will not come back void until it has accomplished its purpose in our lives; therefore, we exalt Your Word this morning. Father, forever, as Your Word says, “Your Words is settled forever in the heavens,” and You are the same God yesterday, today and forever. You will never change. And this morning, I pray, Father, even as we hear the Word, You would grant us grace to change according to the Word we receive. Grant us obedient hearts. Deceptive minds, this morning, we come against every spirit of tiredness and distraction in the Name of Jesus. Speak, Lord, life into our dry bones. Dead bones in our lives. You speak, O Lord. Let Your Word go forth and bring life because Your Words says that Your Words are Spirit and life, O Lord. Let it bring life into us. Cause us to walk in Your ways that we will be released for Your glory. Anoint us even as we speak and even as we hear. Let there be one teacher and let Your name be gloried through everything. In Jesus’ Mighty Name, Amen.

Even as we have come into the end of ten years as a Church, you know I was reading through the Bible; I mean, through this year’s Bible in one year or less I don’t know. But one of the things I do is I read through chapters. I mean, book by book. I don’t have divisions; I don’t go New Testament and Old Testament. I read through one Book continuously to get the flow of thought. And as I was reading, the Lord spoke to me and I believe that this is what the Lord has for us. This morning and in the light in what we have been studying and in the light of the coming year that we should prepare ourselves as a Church. The verse with what I want to begin is on *Romans 8*. The very famous verse that we all know 8:28, right?

Romans 8:28-30

²⁸ And we know (I hope we know. The problem is many believers don’t know. Okay) **that** (How many things?) **all things work together for good** (I hope we believe that) **to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.**

See that.

...all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

And what is His purpose? It is found in the next two verses. In *verse 29-30*,

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,

That is the purpose. The purpose is that, all of us, I hope you believe this, that we should become like Jesus. I mean, that is significant. You need to understand that Christian life, Christianity is just not we will be saved from our sins and we’ll go to heaven. No. The whole idea of salvation; salvation is a continuous process that we’ll not be just saved from the penalty of our sin, that we’ll not be only be saved from the power of sin; that we will have the very life of God flowing through us, that is Jesus Himself. That’s the reason why you know children sang that song, “Tis mystery all! The immortal dies.” They had no idea what they are singing; they just memorized it. But once they grow old, when they fall into sin, I believe that the Spirit of the Lord will just remind them all the song that they memorized that particular song will surely come to them, “Long imprisoned Spirit lay fast bound in sin nature night.” I look at these children, no bound; they were not bound in sin for sure. “Fast bound in sin and nature’s night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon filled with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. Amazing love! how can it be That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?” That’s the song they are singing. And “tis mystery that immortal dies” the great mystery is not that God rose from the dead. Because God cannot be dead. But the thing is the mystery, the greater mystery is that He died. How can somebody who is immortal die? That’s the question that the hymn writer is asking. And he says, “That’s a great mystery. Who can explore His strange design? In vain, the firstborn seraph tries, To sound the depths of love Divine! ’Tis mercy all! let earth adore, Let angel minds inquire no more. ’Tis mercy all! let earth adore, Let angel minds inquire no more. Amazing

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love! how can it be That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?" So, the whole idea of God sending His Son to die for us on the Cross is just not merely that they will save us from penalty of sin but that He will birth His Son in us. You see?

What is the greatest gift that God gave man? His Son, right? *God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son.* The greatest treasure, the greatest gift that God could give man is Himself. Now, tell me – what is the greatest gift that man can give to God? No. Himself again. The greatest gift that God can give to man is Himself and the greatest gift that man can give to God is himself. You see? And that, therefore, the very gift of the life of Christ in us is the gift that we give back to God. Only because only Christ is perfect, nobody else is. That is the whole idea of Christianity not just saved from sin, but the very life of God will be birthed in us and that the infinite God will come and start dwelling inside of us. Do you believe that? And you'll look at yourself and say, "Oh, God; really, Vijay? It's too good to be true that He will dwell inside of us and then He will give Himself to Himself through us and glorify Himself." Oh, that's a great mystery. You see. That is the whole idea of Christianity that we should be conformed to the image of His. Believe that. And therefore, we are not conformed to the image of His Son, then there something wrong. You still haven't completely apprehended the truth of the Word of God. Therefore, that is the whole destination, right? And therefore, in order to do that what does God do? Moreover, who he predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. Therefore

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

So, He calls us, He justifies us, and He glorified and the question, therefore, we were asking ourselves is: what glorifies God? Only Himself can glory God. And therefore, in *Colossians* "So, to be conformed to the image of His Son is the whole idea of glorifying God." If Christ is not in us, then we will not glorify Him. That's the whole thought here. Therefore, *Colossians* says, in *Chapter 1:26-27*,

Colossians 1:26-27

²⁶ the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. ²⁷ To them God willed to make known what the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles are: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The hope of glory. That is the reason why *Corinthians* will say, *2 Corinthians 13* will say, "Examine yourselves. See if Christ is formed in you because He alone can glorify God. none of us; all our efforts will fall to the ground." Only God can glorify God. The ultimate purpose of God is to glorify Himself. And the ultimate purpose of man is to glorify God by allowing Him to work through us and glorify Him. So, that is the whole idea of Christian life. It's just not being saved from our sin and forgiveness. Forgiveness of sin was always available in the Old Testament as well you know that, right? We by-hearted *Psalms 103*, if I am right.

Psalms 103:3

³ Who forgives all our iniquities, who heals all our diseases.

Forgiveness of sins was available. So, if it's just mere forgiveness you want, Old Testament is there. If you want something else, you should glorify God. That is God Himself. God had to come and He had to enter into us in some mysterious way and through us glorify Himself. The question, therefore, we need to ask ourselves is: how does God do that? What is the process through which He takes the in order to glorify Himself through our lives? And this coming year, I believe with all of my heart. I am telling myself over and over again. It's something you need to speak to yourself often. You need to preach to yourself. Honestly, you need to constantly be preaching to yourself. "Why are you downcast, oh my soul?" Constantly asking yourself and preaching to yourself.

So, one passage in the Old Testament especially some of our favourite; all of you love this chapter. You are familiar with this portion in the Bible. What is the process through which God takes us in order to ensure that the image of God that is Christ Himself, is not only birthed inside of us but also keeps growing inside of us? And that is found in *Isaiah 49* and I am going to read few verses and expound it. that will be the central core of today's message. The core of today's message. Okay? This is *Isaiah 49*.

Isaiah 49:1

¹ Listen to me, O coastlands (this is verse 1 onwards) and give attention, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name.

Okay? That is the English Standard Bible Version. Another version.

¹ Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.

That is how He called. You see. Think about it. I look at one guy in the New Testament who understood this idea very clearly. And this guy I mean of course going to read his letter. This is found in *Galatians 1*. This is Paul in this letter he is talking about himself.

Galatians 1:13-15

¹³ For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the Church of God and tried to destroy it. (This is Apostle Paul, he wanted to destroy the Church. He hated Christians. Okay. And you know what he says in the next verse?)¹⁴ I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

And he was absolutely zealous for God and by the way Paul's zeal did not change. The zeal for the wrong thing became the zeal for a right thing, after he got saved. The problem many Christians are now zealous because they never had any zeal. See? And then what he says? Look at it,

¹⁵ But when God, who set me apart from my (What?) mother's womb and called me by his grace..

Do you see, when was he called? Even before he was born in his mother's womb, He called him. But what is the trajectory he took? He allowed Paul to be born as a Pharisee in a pharisaical family. For almost 20 years of his life, he was growing and going to a synagogue and going to a Yeshiva, a Jewish seminary studying the law, hating Christians. Okay. Then, he becomes 25 years old and 26 years old and he hears about this new sect which has been formed people are going crazy after this and soon choose becoming Christians; he is so angry and starts persecuting them. God does not stop him there. God did not meet him in the seminary. God did not meet him in his home. God allowed him to destroy the Church where he was responsible for the death of Stephen. Till that point, God did not stop him. The trajectory that Apostle Paul takes is phenomenal. God would have stopped him before the death of Stephen but God did not stop him. And then, when Stephen died, something happened to Paul. That man said, "Lord, let this sin be against them." And he looked at it and said, "Boy, these people know God and I don't know." And something started to happen. Conscience was pricking. And he said, "No, I am right; they are wrong" and he started taking letters from the synagogue and he wanted to go and persecute Christians even in Damascus. Then, He meets God. And after he meets Him, his life is completely radically changed. And when he writing *Galatians*, you know what? "God called me. In spite of all that I have done but he called me even before I was born in my mother's womb."

You know what the lessons to learn? Pastor was doing some confessions last time; last Sunday, right? Let us do that confession this morning. First, lessons to learn. Say it loudly, "I am not an accident." I am not an accident. Second, "God chose my parents." Do you believe that? There are so many of us very difficult thing to believe. Especially in our Church. If you come from Hindu background specially. "Arrey, I would have been great if I was born in a Christian background. It would have been easy for me to come to the Lord." Come on. Second – God chose your parents. Third one, "God chose my country." Everybody say that; I mean, I always speak to myself, I say, "How great it would have been If I would have been born in the USA." Land of opportunities or Canada or all these developed countries. And that is the reason why I wanted to immigrate okay and I was kicked out. God had a purpose because He said, "You cannot despise your country." This is my country. God chose my country. God chose my parents. Do you believe that? Next one – God chose my mother tongue. I am not kidding. So many of us, especially gultis are ashamed to speak in Telugu. And that is the reason why Pastor James uses sarcasm, "You foreigners," he says.

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Next one – God chose the financial conditions into which I was born. How many of you believe that? Say that, if you believe, confess it – “God chose the financial conditions into which I was born.” Oh, some people say, “if I was born in rich family, in this family or that family.” God chose your financial conditions. God chose your parents. God chose your country. God chose your mother tongue. There were no accidents. You are not an accident.

Another one – He divinely orchestrated all the events of my life so that one day, I will hear His call and respond. That is what Paul teaches is, “He made me kill Stephen. Aiyo. Stephen’s blood is on my hands.” But God allowed that. Not that God willed Stephen should die but He allowed Stephen to die in the hands of Paul because through him, He was starting to work in the heart of Paul and I am sure some kind of an equivalence Stephen experienced happened in your life. I mean I know some radical people who come from other religions most of them have these testimonies. “I hated Christians.” Am I right? You come from an unbelieving background; you know it. She always hears that. All quote Gandhi. Gandhi loved Jesus, but he hated but he was turned away because of Christians. Now, tell me, that is an excuse, right? I’ll tell you why it is an excuse. Gandhi did not accept Christ because he says, “I love your Jesus, but I don’t like you Christians, because you don’t behave like Christ behaves.” Now tell me how many of you looked at other Christians and got saved? You saw the mistakes of others and did you say, “Arrey, these people are like that”? No! Nothing like that happened. I saw so many compromisers in my life, but I still chose to follow God. That is a copout because you had to confess Christ to the whole world and that would have been not very good for him, I think. I don’t know. In hind’s sight, I feel that he missed an incredible opportunity. Every event in my life, He divinely orchestrated; you know, it’s like a symphony, right? The guy comes, starts and you do the, let that mother-in-law, for starts, spanking her a little because that will bring her to Christ. Let that husband of her do something; that is symphony. Lot of symphony going on and people are dancing and slowly, through circumstances, people are coming all the events orchestrated. So, one day, you will hear the call of God and respond.

Let me tell you something and this is my testimony. If God would not have done that to my life, I would have never known Him. I thank God and that is the reason the first verse I started with, “*All things work together for the good of those who love God and who are called according to His purpose.*” You believe that? So, the next lesson, therefore, God did not call me and said, “Ah fantastic person. This fellow will be a fantastic testimony for My Kingdom.” No! That is what Israel thought, “We are such fantastic brains. In future, we will have the highest per capita Nobel laureates from our country and therefore, God choose us.” No! Don’t get those ideas. “God choose us in spite of us.” In other words, if you were God, He would not actually choose you because you know some people say, “You don’t know me, I am good.” I don’t know about you but I would definitely not choose myself. This is what God tells the Israelites through Moses in *Deuteronomy*.

Deuteronomy 7:6

⁶“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Until then, they said, “Yes, we are so good and He loves us.” No! Moses immediately takes the gas out and he says,

Deuteronomy 7:7-8

⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, (then he goes on to say) ⁸but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

That is how He called us not because we were any good or we were strong and then he goes on to say

Deuteronomy 9:4-6

⁴“Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, ‘It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’ whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. ⁵Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. ⁶“Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.

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Say that, "I am a stubborn people." We believe that? Oh, I believe it with all of my heart about myself. Hard nut to crack, stubborn rebellious. My parents were tested for that for sure. I tell you something, when you go back home, they are not impressed because they know you well. Maybe, you are impressed with the sermon but when we go back home, they are not impressed. They will not say, "Oh, father, come home you have preached a great sermon." They will never say that because they know me very well. Not because of any good quality inside of us that God choose us. No! I have heard from so many believers saying, "Because I was good from my childhood, I used to have this inclination towards God and God started it." Not because you had an inclination; it's because of His probing and pruning; it's a conscious that God gave. Everything was God. See, that is the reason why He says in *John 6*,

John 6:44

⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;

John 6:37

And the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

So, the lesson that we need to learn, we have not been called because we are professionals because everything is professional today. Professional sport, professional programmer, professional this and that, professional everything. Professional cook; it's a profession. We have what is that vahrevah.com. Those guys, they started YouTube channel and they meant money. That fellow is a software engineer by the way and has become a cook. So, everything is professional. Professional cook, professional housemaid because they have mobile phones and they have everything to inform you that they are not coming, etc. Everything professional. But Christianity is not professional. Look at what Paul says in *1 Corinthians* to the Corinthian Church.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards...

How many of you are IIT-JEE first rank here? Please, can I see your hands? For sure, you are not yet. I pray, I am not saying that you shouldn't become IIT-JEE first but you are still not there, right? The best rank here is the sister who is sitting there in Medical school. She is very brilliant; much better than I.

...not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth (blue blood). ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise;

Are you foolish? Do you consider yourself foolish? Oh, it is so difficult because we all are professional fools. "*The fool has said in his heart there is no God.*" Professionals you see.

²⁷ God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, (Are you despised in the world? Then God choose you) even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

Because, ultimately, God should, what? Glorify Himself; not us. Therefore, we are not called because we are not professionals. I got this particular term called professional when I was reading through the Bible in NLT. I have read thorough out the Bible in KJV and now reading in other translation to get a complete picture of a particular of a verse. This is in NLT in Amos about *Amos 7*,

Amos 7:10-12

¹⁰ Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam, king of Israel: "Amos is hatching a plot against you right here on your very doorstep! What he is saying is intolerable. (Means words are too much to bare.) ¹¹ He is saying, 'Jeroboam will soon be killed, and the people of Israel will be sent away into exile.'" ¹² Then Amaziah sent orders to Amos: "Get out of here, you prophet! Go on back to the land of Judah, and earn your living by prophesying there!

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Professionals. That is what exactly is happening today. Professional prophets. You send them an offering, they will prophesy for you. They have a what you called as a fee, professional fee. If we go to the doctors, they have Doctors consultation charges, professional services, right? Professional courses. How many years were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Babylonian school? Three years. Bachelor's degree? Three years. Professional degree, three plus one four minimum. Professionals!

Amos 7:13-14

¹³ Don't bother us with your prophecies here in Bethel. This is the king's sanctuary and the national place of worship!"

Look at Amos's answer, fantastic answer.

¹⁴ But Amos replied, "I'm not a professional prophet, and I was never trained to be one. I'm just a shepherd, and I take care of sycamore-fig trees. (I was a farmer, a Sheppard). ¹⁵ But the LORD called me away from my flock and told me,

Not because of my professional; He just called me in spite of my background. That is what He is trying to say. Let me tell you something, my brothers and sisters, so many of us wish that we were not us but we were somebody else. I mean, I hear conversations, "I wish I had this. I had that. You're kind of," whatever. "You don't know me." I told you, right? Greek barbarian – same thing. "I am not a professional prophet," he said, "*that the LORD called me away.*" John Piper wrote a book called "Brothers, we are not professionals," and one brother gave that book to me and another brother stole it from me. He is in Jamshedpur. Sorry and you know him. "Brothers, we are not professionals." This is what he says, John Piper, in his book, 'Brothers, we are not professionals'. This is what he says, "We are fools for Christ's sake but professionals are wise. We are weak but professionals are strong. Professionals are held in honor; we are in disrepute. We do not try to secure a professional lifestyle but we are ready to hunger and thirst, to be ill-clad and homeless." That is the reason why God called us; not because we were great, we had degrees around our names. The more the number of degrees you have, the greater the stumbling blocks and the greater your insecurity. Why do you people have degrees? Because you are insecure. That is the reason why you have degrees. "Doctor so-and-so." "No, don't call me doctor or reverend. You should call me right reverent Doctor. Oh! My goodness. See, professionals! So, God didn't choose us because we were great; no. And He called us, in spite of us, right from our mother's womb. And He had a plan for us and He orchestrated every event of our life so that we will meet Him one day. Do you believe that? If you believe, say 'Amen.'

But the point is – God didn't call us to make us remain like that. He called fishermen but fishermen became scholars. Okay, do you agree? Fishermen didn't remain fishermen. John, okay, leave aside Apostle Paul. Peter was a fisherman. Actually, they were unlettered fishermen, they became lettered and they wrote some of the logical thesis, if you will. People are still breaking their heads over it and get a PhD in Theology – by studying a fisherman's thesis. They had revelation. Something happened. What was God doing to each and every one of them? Now, He took them and He started to form the image of His Son, slowly, incrementally day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year. So, what does He do? Let's go back to *Isaiah 49* and see. What the Lord does?

Isaiah 49:2

² And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me."

The first thing God wants to do, in order to form you in His image, He wants to take your mouth and He wants to make it, got it? I'll tell you why. What you know about a person? If you want to know, who that person truly is, listen to that person in his most unguarded moments and see what comes out of his mouth. That is what he is, in reality. I mean, I travel with Pastor James in the car and I drive Him to different, different places. And when the traffic irritates me, that is my unguarded moment. Okay, what I am truly, what you don't see from the pulpit. That is where, I am not speaking my mother tongue. I am speaking my mother tongue, next to my father (spiritual father, that is). And then, he looks at me and he says, "Vijay." He hears my words and comes to a conclusion. You know what does he say? "You are an impatient man!" See, what has happened? Did he test my impatience by putting me under pressure? No. He watched my words during my most unguarded moments, that is, when you are with your family and when your children irritate you, and your wife gets on your head. Those are what we call as 'Unguarded moments.' I mean, there was one unguarded moment – I am still embarrassed about. There is one brother sitting, I hope he is not falling asleep. That is to wake him up. I finished IIT and I came out, and I handed over my thesis for review. Review came back and the examiner rejected. Not rejected; he just sent back my thesis

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with red ink all over. I looked at it in the email; blood started boiling. I was in the LTD office; all the children were out. I thought, that's what I thought. And the office, by the way, is not enclosed, it's got enclosure and the roof is above the wall. Unguarded moment, and language came out. Went out and language was coming out, all over the place and it was coming at an incredible speed, the way I speak generally. And one brother saw it and I looked at him, "Pastor, speaking very good language." I said, "Oh! My goodness" God knows the ways to humble you, right? Strip you off all of your guile, your hypocrisy and catches you at those unguarded moments and I looked at Him and I said, "First thing, I should do, I should give a call to my Sister Ailsa." "Sister Ailsa, unguarded moment." The words that people speak at most unguarded moments of their lives is, what they really are. And Jesus, by the way, incredible amount of pressure that He was facing but never speaks out of turn.

What God has done? He has made His mouth. You know what God is doing in all of us? He is catching hold of our mouths. Even Peter as he was praying, "Lord, I am a man of (what lips?) Unclean lips, touch me." Every prophet, before He commissioned, He had to touch their mouths – Old Testament, New Testament. God had to touch all of their tongues because Peter had a lot of mother tongue. It came out during this unguarded moments when someone asked him, "Are you that person with Jesus of Nazareth?" "No, no." Cursing in his mother tongue. That was real Peter. So, what God has to do in order for us, to have the image of Christ to be formed in us? Take hold of our mouth and He has to make it.

Proverbs 18:4

⁴ The words of a man's mouth are (what?) deep waters; The wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook.

I tell you something – God is so interested in our conversations... Say that, confess: "God is interested in my conversation." I know you fear. I mean, you and I fear – if you really fear God or not. Just do one thing, do an experiment – take a recorder and keep it in your pocket. And record your speech through the day and by the end of the day, before you sleep, just replay it back. And you will know how much you really fear God. That's what exactly happened, right? People, when they are on phone, they use all kinds of language. That's how they threat. See that, record it. Record your conversation. So, very important. I'll know how much I fear God by recording my conversations. God says that in one of His 3:16; it's not *John 3:16*, not *1 John 3:16*. It is *Malachi 3:16*. Look at what it says,

Malachi 3:16

¹⁶ Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.

Now, they didn't stop speaking; they spoke often. And God listened to them and heard them. Listening and hearing. Taking careful note of all the WhatsApp and the Twitter and the Instagram and the Facebook and the review columns etc, etc etc because He is very, very interested what His people, His children speak. And He knows, whether they fear Him or not by recording the conversations of His children. So, He records.

... "So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name....."

How much you fear the Lord is often disclosed by just recording and observing your conversation. Okay, that is very important for God. Therefore, He has to touch it. He has to touch it. Therefore, He says in *Mathew 12*. What does it say? *Romans* will say,

Romans 3:18

²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

James will say,

James 3:17

¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

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But Jesus says something incredible. Paul says, “Justified by faith alone, apart from works.” James says, “If you really have faith, you need to have works.” And those works will prove that you have been justified. Jesus adds on; what does He say? In *Matthew 12:35* onwards.

Matthew 12:35-37

³⁵ ***A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.*** ³⁶ ***But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.*** (Do you take it seriously? Why? Because) ³⁷ ***For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.***

You know your true self by the kind of the words that you speak; how you are with your wife? How you are with your children? How you are with your co-workers, colleagues, your boss? How do you change when your boss suddenly comes? Or you will be like, “Please, Sir. Okay, Sir.” This is the language people use most often. See unguarded moments. That is the reason why James will say,

James 3:1-3

³ ***Not many of you should become teachers,*** I am scared, I didn’t want to be a teacher, seriously, honestly. I didn’t want to be one because of this verse ***my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*** And I said, “Lord, let me go out of this. Why?” ² ***For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.***

In other words, your entire body; can you believe that that your entire body can be controlled by your tongue? Do you know that? Your emotions, your actions, your body language everything is determined by the tongue? That is why it says that rudder of the ship is the smallest part of the ship but it changes the entire course of its destination because it is one who controls the whole body. Therefore, God is interested in what you speak, how you speak, what you say and how you say is very interested in making your mouth. Why? Because,

1 Corinthians 14:32-33

³² ***The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.***

Oh! You cannot say that, “The Spirit came upon me and I lost control and did everything.” No. Lot of people in charismatic movement, they are like that. “Oh! The Spirit came and I don’t know what I was saying.” No, nothing of that sort. You are absolutely in control. You know when to start and you know when to stop. Jesus never had to speak in tongues, by the way. He communicated with the Father. He knew the heavenly language. God understood His language.

³³ ***For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.***

Therefore, you know the first thing that He does is He wants to take control of our tongue. Say that – “God wants to take control of my tongue.” Say that again – “I want to give the control of my tongue to God.” If you are serious, watch your conversation. Don’t say that, “Jesus is the silent observer let me...” No, that is not the way to do it. What do you do? You change inside out. Christianity is not the outside religion. It is an inside-out religion. What comes out of the mouth is from the heart. That’s what *Matthew 12* says. So, ask God to change your heart. *Life and death is in the power of your tongue.*

Look at this one man in the Old Testament who puts us to shame. It is in *Ezekiel 3:24-27*. If really the Spirit of the Lord comes, then this should happen,

Ezekiel 3:24-27

²⁴ ***Then the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet. He spoke to me and said: “Go, shut yourself inside your house.***

God is telling many of us before the tenth year to go and shut yourself. Meditate, study. You know the one of the things that I am jealous about Pastor James is – “Vijay, I am having a wonderful time with God.” And I said, “Lord, I wish I could have that time. I want that time with You.” Spend time with God. Shut yourselves with God. He doesn’t stop there,

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²⁵ And you, son of man, they will tie with ropes; you will be bound so that you cannot go out among the people.

Can you imagine this guy? He goes into his house, shuts himself in and ask his servant, "Come here." "Sir, what shall I do?" "Please tie me to the wall." "Why?" "Because I might have the impulse to go out. I don't want to go out." Any one of you should ask somebody to tie you in your home because you are itching to go somewhere. You can never have the image of God is formed into you unless you have the devotion with Him. We are devotional people and not professional people. How do two become one? It is because we communicate with each other, we exchange ideas, we talk to each other. We understand what each other's minds is by the words that comes out of each other's mouth in a relationship. He says, "Shut yourself in and tie yourself." Many of you should tie yourself up and some of you actually have to go out because you are there for such a long time now.

²⁶ I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth...

Everybody, stick your tongue to the roof of the mouth. "Can you speak?" "No." That's what He is saying, "Shut your mouth for some days until or unless I ask you to speak."

...so that you will be silent and unable to rebuke them, for they are a rebellious people.

In other words, "Ah, Lord! I have to something! "Shut your mouth, please." We are always very quick. As Sis. Ailsa was praying, "A gentle answer turns away wrath," why we should not be angry? Because the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of what God requires. And many of us, men and ladies, should ask God to tie my tongue to the roof of my mouth. That is how you win your husbands by the way. Not by taking Bible Study. "Lord, he is a rebel." Tie the tongue to the roof of the mouth please. "Oh! Does he not know the Bible? He is an educated fellow but acting like a barbarian." Win your husband without a word. Please put the tongue to the roof of your mouth please. That's what God telling many of us because He wants to make our mouth. Let me tell you something, if He is able to control our mouth, ah! We have become a perfect man. We are there. It is not controlling your eyes; it is controlling your tongue. Try that out. Then He says,

Ezekiel 3:27

²⁷ But when I speak to you...

"When I give you a message on WhatsApp, everybody is itching." I am not saying that you should not send. *Proverbs* says even the fool is also considered wise when he doesn't open his mouth. You want people to know that you are wise? Please don't send WhatsApp because sometimes, it's very telling about your ignorance. Think twice when you send messages on public forum. This is not to offend you. So, when I give you a message on WhatsApp or Twitter, this is the modern day language, it was there during biblical time also,

...I will open your mouth...

People speak with their hands very often these days. I used to remember when Hrishi used to use phones those days. Those button phones, right? His fingers just keep moving. It's like the cursor on the keyboard. This is exactly people are. Hands are like tongue and now it's both hands. Stop! But when God gives you a message, then there is a burden in your heart. And even like *Jeremiah* says, "God! I don't want to speak. How can I stop myself from speaking? It's like fire shut in my bones. I have to speak." "But when I give you a message, I will loosen your tongue, your hands equivalently; then, you speak or type equivalently,"

...and you shall say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says.' Whoever will listen let them listen, and whoever will refuse let them refuse; for they are a rebellious people.

Don't try to click on info to check how many people read it. "Pastor did not read it." Don't get offended. Just speaking your language. By the way, my boss, he is a Robotics researcher and one of the most famous researchers of Robotics in India, he is not on WhatsApp and I am not so famous researcher and I am on WhatsApp. And I am looking at it, no wonder these people are successful in what they do. You know what? The sons of the world are wiser than the sons of the Kingdom

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because they know where to invest their time and their money. But we people are so itching to say something. "Hold on." Why? I will tell you why it is important. Look at what it says in,

Psalms 12:4

⁴Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?

Freedom of speech hai bhai (is there)! Kuch bhi bol sakthe hai (Anything can be said)! Many of them are getting into trouble because they are exercising their freedom of speech. So many things could have been avoided when people ask God to make their tongue to stick to their roof of their mouth. Instead of doing that they just itching and start doing all kinds of things and get into trouble. I didn't say that. Look at,

Proverbs 21:23

²³Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.

How many of you want to keep yourselves from calamity? Oh! Some of you don't want to? If you really want to, hands up in the air unashamedly. So, we all want to? This is important because God wants to take hold of our mouth and make it. Another translation

...Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut. And you stay out of trouble.

This is the New Living Translation. It's very lively.

So, what does God want our mouth or tongue to make into? First, He wants to make our mouth but what does He want to make our mouth into? Let's read that.

Isaiah 49:2

²He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.

I remember Pastor James giving this example; he says, "Many people cut, some use rumpum; that is carpenter; some use axe, that is also used to cutting. To become a carpenter, how many years does it takes? You go to carpentry school. In one year, you will get the diploma in cutting with rumpum. And if you have one automated rumpum, you don't even have to do that; you just have to watch that movie called Hoodwinked. This guy, once he understands how to chop the trees, he takes his axe and keeps chopping trees and he is so excited about it. Doesn't take much skill to become a good axe bearer. But some people use their sword like a surgeon's scalpel." Pastor said, "For one cut, one lakh. If you had open heart, by the time you see the bill, you will have another attack." So, you should have double open heart. For that one cut, how many years he studied? She will be studying for five years; she will not be satisfied. She will study for another two years for PG. PG is almost impossible unless you are extremely hard working. I am not scaring you, I wish you do PG. Study really hard, crack the entrance exam. Then, go FRCS and then, go to MS etc and finally, they give you a one cut - one lakh! They will not give just like that. You know what does God want us to become? The mouth should become like the knife of the surgeon. In order to do that, what does He do?

Isaiah 50:4

⁴The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.

This is very true of all those people who studied for medical entrance exam. Morning by morning, your mother awakened you and sometimes, kicks you out of the bed also and sometimes, she poured water on your face, right? Because you should have the knife in your hands which will heal people. That's exactly what God is saying. If you really want to have your mouth to become like the sharp sword of the surgeon, what should you do? "Get up morning by morning and listen to My Word." Don't speak until you hear.

Proverbs 12:18

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¹⁸ ***There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health.***

When the guy who is only a surgeon, he is not going to harm you; he is going to heal you. Therefore, he uses his scalpel very carefully. That's what God wants to do with our mouth. He wants to make it a sharpened sword which will heal people. Some people when they speak, you feel like listening to them, it's so gracious. I can take examples from my own life. I go to Pastor and like to listen to him even his rebuke. 'Jor ka Jadhka Dhire se lage' but jadhka laga. It's like a leech in your mind. It eats you slowly. It's like a slow thing which keeps going down and down; Word of God penetrating the joints and marrows; the thoughts and the intents; everything is being laid naked and bare so that you can become the healer. That's why it is said that,

Isaiah 42:3

³ ***A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;***

And he will know what exactly he has to speak to a guy word and season for those who are weary. That is what He want to make my mouth like.

The next thing He wants to do is to hide me He wants to conceal me. Hide me; conceal me! One thing I really don't like, especially in India, is the push to the front. Parents go for the elocution competition. One Psalm these people will learn will be on public display. Every time a guest will come home, "Come, recite *Psalm 23*. Recite in Hebrew." Very intelligent! They don't want to hide their children. I will tell you something, one thing as parents we have to do is hide your children. One of the constant arguments we have at home is how to do that. I tell you something – don't pump up the ego of your child and say, "Very intelligent." That fellow will use his intelligence in very negative way to get away. I tell you most intelligent people are the people who get away easily with all kinds of crimes. I told you several times, right? "Very intelligent." "But he smokes." "But he is very intelligent." But what it has to do? This is how we have conversations in our homes. We glorify talent but we don't hide. The Son of Man came with all His power – you know what God did? He hid him in Nazareth and when someone came to attack, what did He do? He ran. He didn't say, "I'm the Son of God; send angels." No. hide. That's what He is doing; He hid me and He concealed me. What does God do when He hides you and conceals you? You know what God does? He breaks you. He tests you. He takes you through trouble. He takes you through persecution, He takes you through trials, and He takes you through all kinds of difficult situations so that He can make you a sharpened sword in your mouth. Look at what it says in, and a polished arrow, we will come to the polished arrow.

Luke 1:80

⁸⁰ ***And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.***

Who is this? John the Baptist who was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb; he is there in the wilderness for how long? For 30 years in the wilderness. God was breaking him, crushing him, taking him through all kinds of troubles and one day, he will come and he will speak only one word – "Repent!" You know what will happen? The entire nation will come to Jordan and be baptised because that is what has happened to his mouth, it has become a sharpened sword. Because God hid him and dealt with him.

Deuteronomy 8:1-3

¹ ***Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers.*** ² ***And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these (how many years?) Forty years in the wilderness, (to do what?) To humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*** ³ ***So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.***

What God is doing? He is taking us through the wilderness. Called to be an apostle, separated to the Gospel of God. What does it mean to be a bondservant? In those days, servants were, slaves were actually, bond slaves and bondservants are the same thing. Slaves were purchased from the market and after you purchase him from the market, you bring him to the house, he works with you for 6 years. And on the 7th year, you will release him. But on the 7th year, he will come back again and say, because he likes his master and he loves him so much; he says, "Master, I don't want to be released; I want to be

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your servant for life. I want to be your bondservant.” So, what does the master do? He takes the hal; he takes him to the doorpost of his house and he pierces his ear through the hal and then, from that time onwards, he becomes his bondservant voluntarily. What does the piercing of the ear mean? “From today onwards, master, I’m going to listen only to your voice; I’m not going to listen to anybody else.” That’s what it means. And what God wants to do, He wants to make us into servants who will only obey Him and no other master we will have. He is my Master alone. So, what does He do? This is quoted in Hebrew by the way. This is talking about Jesus.

Psalms 40:6-8

⁶ *Sacrifice and offering you did not desire; (what did you do?) My ears you have opened.* (It’s not opened actually the word here is, dug through.) *Burnt offering and sin offering you did not require.* ⁷ *Then I said, “Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me.* ⁸ *I delight to do your will, O my God, And your law is within my heart.”*

What did God do to Jesus in the years? He dug through. From that day onwards, Jesus is only going to listen to His Father and nobody else and therefore, He says” My doctrine is not My own; it is the Father who has given Me what to teach. The works that I do, I received it from My Father. Everything that I do, I have only one master and that is God alone.” That is what He wants to do with each one of us; that we will have no other loyalty. God wants us to become loyal servants who will not listen to anybody other than his voice in our lives. That is what it means to become His servant.

1 Corinthians 7:23

²³ *You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men.*

What does it mean? Don’t try to please men, don’t try to change the way you live when you see pressure coming from outside; no. you were brought with a price; you only listen to God’s voice. Look at what he says in *Galatians 1:10*,

Galatians 1:10

¹⁰ *For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.*

You see that? I would not be a bondservant of Christ, see that?

Isaiah 49; let’s move on. What else God does want to do with us?

Isaiah 49:4

⁴ *But I said, “I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing at all. Yet what is due me is in the Lord’s hand, And my reward is with my God.”*

What happens? Once you become a servant, you keep working and working and working. Do you see results? Not often. You know they say Madam Curie; how many of you know Madam Curie? Okay. What did she discover? Radium. You know how she discovered radium? She had tone and tone and piles and piles of data on her table, she sifted and sifted and sifted, years and years. And one fine day, after she sifted through all the data one day, she found that one small, shiny particle. It’s a lone process, what does it tell me? You know, I was listening to this man of God, who was telling a story of a missionary in Columbia. Columbia or Venezuela, I’m not sure. One of the South American countries. There is a South American country called Cali, a city called Cali, in Columbia or Venezuela, where they grow marijuana. Those days, this is in 1984. 1984, according to the 1984 statistics, that particular small village, town called Cali, not kali but c-a-l-i, Cali in Spanish. They used to produce 1000-crore worth of marijuana every year and send it to United States. And there was this missionary who had this tremendous burden for that particular town because he was from that town. So, he used to go to the mountain top, in that city and go to the top of the mountain and he used to pray and pray and praise the Lord. He used to have this burden and say, “Lord, do something this town, Lord. Do something, Lord. Get a revival. Stop this, Lord and that this town will become a blessing to many people.” He used to pray and pray and pray. Years and years passed by. Nothing happened. One day, God said, “Go and do something.” And he goes to the town and there are about 16 Churches in that town; he goes to every Pastor and he says, “God told me that we should organise a worship concert in the football ground of the town.” They have one football ground. “God wants us to organise a worship concert.” And the Pastor said, “Why do you want to organise it there? Why can’t we have it in the Church? And we will be safe.” But he said, “No. We will organise it in the

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football ground.” So, he asked all the pastors but none of them came. So, he waited for a week, nobody responded. He wanted to do it on a Saturday. On Wednesday, he said, “These guys are not going to do it.” On Wednesday evening, there were some local gangsters who understood that those guys wanted to do some prayer meeting and they didn’t want that to happen, they killed him. Missionary. His name is Julio Rosario. This happened in 1984. They killed him, his body was not found for almost 24 hours. The next day, they found the body and all the pastors came together and they were shocked. They buried him, they finished the funeral and they went back home and one of the pastors said, “This guy, when he was here, he asked us to go and pray and he also was convicted. He died for us.” So, you know what he did? Slowly, he went to the football stadium and started going around the football stadium, praying, “Hallelujah, praise the Lord. Hallelujah, praise the Lord.” After a while, another pastor came. They didn’t talk to each other. He also got convicted and he also came. Another pastor came and within an hour, all the 16 pastors of the local Church came and started praying in that football stadium. Within 2 days, 20,000 people came into the stadium and there was mighty revival and they all got saved and within 6 weeks, every shop which was selling drugs and everything, closed down. This is there. It’s there actually if you go and check on YouTube. ‘Cali marijuana’. You just type it out ‘Cali transformation viamp’, you’ll find the entire video. Within 6 months, the whole town and all the gangsters were arrested and there was a mighty revival. And the place where they used to grow nirvana, they stopped growing marijuana and they started planting carrots. They started planting carrots and potatoes and cabbage or cauliflower. So, when the carrots started to grow, they became so big almost a foot long; have you seen a foot long carrot hardly? The potatoes, each potato was 2 kilograms in weight and the cauliflower was huge that they had at least 2 people to carry it and they sent 3 agricultural scientists from Germany, Japan and Mexico to find out what’s happening on. They came and tested the soil over there and they went outside the town Cali and they tested the soil over there and they didn’t find any difference and they were thinking how come the plants are growing so much big. You know what the man of God said? This man, he said, “You know, Lord, I humble myself and You said in Your prayer in Your Word, ‘when My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and repent and pray, I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land,” and this is exactly what he prayed over and over again and that man died at that place there was a might harvest and might revival. This has happened in 1984. Not to long ago, by the way, in 1986, she was born. Very, very recent. You see what does it tell me? You know, the servant says, “Lord, I have laboured in vain,” and so many of you will look at your circumstances and your children and your spouses and say, “Lord, how many years, Lord? I laboured and laboured. Will I see fruit in my life? Will I ever see fruit in my life? Will I see people changing during my life time? Will I see people my sons and my daughters getting saved in my life time? Will I see my husband changing in my life time? Will I see my wife changing in my life time? Will anything happen, Lord? In vain, I have spent all my strength for nothing, Lord.” You know what the Lord says? “Yet nothing is due Me and My reward is still with Me.” That is the reason why Paul will say in,

Galatians 6:8-10

⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. ⁹And let us not grow weary while doing well, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Don’t give up when you don’t see results.

You know one of the things that we are in this generation is instant everything. Instant class, instant results. That is exactly how children come to my class and say, “Sir, what is the minimum I should do to get a pass mark?” They want everything easy. They don’t want to work hard, they don’t want to stick and stay at it for long hours of time and if you really want anything worthwhile in your life, you will not see fruit immediately. You will not. As parents, did we ever give up on our children? My parents never stopped. They would never hesitate to spank me when I was in B. Tech also, sometimes. They will not; why? They don’t want to give up on their children. They don’t want to give up on their spouses; they don’t want to give up. Don’t give up; it may not be in your life time but surely His reward is with Him. Look at what *Habakkuk* says; I prayed this with pastor in the morning and he was praying this with me. You know what he said?

Habakkuk 1:2-3

²How long, O LORD, must I call for help? But you do not listen! “Violence is everywhere!” I cry, but you do not come to save. ³Must I forever see these evil deeds? Why must I watch all this misery? Wherever I look, I see destruction and violence. I am surrounded by people who love to argue and fight.

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It describes so many of our family affairs – surrounded by people who would love to argue and to fight. The law has become paralysed and there is no justice in the court. The wicked far outnumber the righteous so that the justice has become perverted. He says, “Lord, how long? How long?” And the Lord comes and gives him the answer. I have heard many prayers vows taken during wedding. When they write wedding cards, they write, “Love is patient, love is kind, love endures all things, love hopes all things, love never fails,” and they type all that in a wedding card and they give it to people. One man of God I’m sure many of you know him; his name is John Piper. This is what he had in his wedding card. You know what he had in his wedding card? This is what he had. Have a look at *chapter 3*.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

¹⁷Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

See that? He says, “Lord, I’m not going to give up even if I don’t see anything because I know as long as I do right, I know my reward is there.” And then, he says, “The Lord is my strength. He will make my feet like deer’s feet and he will help me walk the high hills.” Don’t give up. He said, “Don’t give up,” and it’s going to be a long walk as I’m sure many of you have people in your family who you sing, “Lord, some of them are near their death bed. Will they ever hear the people? Will they ever?” What happened to them? Will you stop praying? Did you stop? Will you give up? Will you stop writing in the prayer Book? Why? Why is this important?

And we’ll stop here. He says, “It is too smaller thing for him to be My servant should you have stolen the tribes of Jacob and bring back those Israel, I have kept. Is it too small to know? It is a big thing.” You know God is interested in the souls of His people. “I will also make you a light for jentas that the salvation may be to the ends of the earth.” I mean, you just look at one man Paul in his lifetime. He wanted to go everywhere and one day, God said, “Go to the prison.” He was locked in prison and he thought his ministry was over and he started writing letters, you know one thing? The most important letter which were sent to doctor of the Church was written is Apostle Paul he was in prison. Did he think someone going to read him? Did he ever realise that we would analyse and do thesis and PhDs and studying this thesis? No, but he still wrote it because he never thought it was a small thing same. And this morning, you know as we entered into tenth year, the last Sunday.

I want to stop here today. Last Sunday of the tenth year and I encourage each one of you, this morning, say, “Lord, help me, Lord. Help me not to give up.” At least this one if you didn’t get anything from this today. “Lord, help me not to give up.” And you know, recently, I had a conversation with one of my mentors when I was growing up. The last conversation I had with him is with scooter when he dropped me at the railway station. He looked at me and said, “Vijay you’re leaving. You may fall ten thousand times or a million times; don’t give up.” He just called me and but it’s, “Don’t give up,” ten thousand times. Million times of times. “Lord, I will not give up this morning.” Come to the Lord this morning.

Can we all stand up and can we just sing one song. I would like the Worship team to come and sing a song, “Salvation belongs to our God; who sits upon the Throne and unto the Lamb, praise and glory, wisdom and strength; honour and power and praise. Be to our God forever.” Let’s sing that song and I will stop and even as we sing that song, let’s take a few moments. Close your eyes and say, “Lord, tenth year. I’m available, Lord. Fresh beginnings, O Lord. Mercies are new every morning and every day of the new year will be a new opportunity. So many times I have not seen fruit but I gave up. I don’t want to give up, Lord. I want to finish my race. Whatever You started in my life, Lord, You said You will be faithful to complete it. You are the Author and the Finisher and I don’t want to give up.” Paul tells the Philippians; he said, “I take hold of that thing for which Christ has taken hold of me.” He has already taken hold of me. I don’t want to give up. I don’t want to let go. I want to cling to Him.”

This morning, even as we sing that song, “Salvation belongs to the Lord,” say, “Lord, touch me this year. Touch me, Lord. Father, I am available. Make my mouth into a sharp sword, make me a polished arrow. Hide me and take me through every testing so that I will be refined and become a polished arrow so that I can become a specific weapon in Your hand that I will fulfil that specific calling that You have given to me, even before the foundation of the earth was laid.”

Closing Song: Salvation Belongs To Our God

Closing Prayer:

Father, we thank You. Lord, It is not by accident, Lord, that we are here in this house this morning, Lord. Father. You have orchestrated every one, O Lord. Every event in each one of our lives, O Lord, that we could come to You and respond to You, O Lord. You didn't have to do it, O Lord. In Your sovereign, divine way, O Lord, You orchestrated every bit in our lives. And, Lord, this morning, Father, we want to fulfil the purpose for which You have called us, O Lord. The purpose not to do but to be, O Lord, to be like Your Son so that You can accomplish Your work through us. O Lord, have mercy, O Lord. If we have squandered years, O Lord, wasted our time in foolish pursuits, O Lord, I pray that You would forgive us. Oh Father, wasted resources, wasted our years and our energies in senseless things. Through Jonah, You said, "Those who run after worthless idols will forsake their own mercy." Lord, we have run after worthless things, O Lord, wasted our time, wasted our resources, wasted so much of our life, O Lord. But this year, O Lord, this coming year, even today, O Lord, You are drawing some of us here, O Lord, young and old, who believe that they are not an accident, who believe everything that happened in their lives has happened for a specific purpose that they will become sharpened, polished arrows in the hands of a Mighty Warrior, Jesus that He can shoot them into enemy's territory. O Lord, make us, O Lord Father, into those sharpened arrows, O Lord. We surrender, O Lord. Take control of our mouths, O Lord. Take control of our tongues, O Lord; our eyes O Lord. O Father, our silver and our gold everything, O Lord. Father, we are not ashamed to pray it, O Lord. Lord Father, we just want to surrender this morning, O Lord.

Just pray to God, this morning. I just want to encourage you to take a few minutes and say, "Lord, touch me, Lord. Touch me, Lord." Raise your hands up this morning, raise your hands and say, "Lord, touch me, touch me, this morning. I have come with an expectancy in my heart. I don't want to go back the same. I want to make an impact in Your Kingdom. I want to be something, O Lord, that will fulfil Your purpose and Your name will be glorified through my life. O Lord, every one of us here – the smallest to the oldest, O Lord." And young ones, don't every think you are too young to serve the Lord. Paul tells to Timothy, "Don't let anyone despise you because of your youth but be an example in speech, in love, in faith and in purity. Let your conduct be known to all." This morning, just surrender. Just pray that prayer from the bottom of your hearts. Just mean it and say, "Lord, just do something with my life. I just surrender, I just surrender everything at the altar, O Lord. I surrender; I surrender my guilt." Some of you heavy with guilt, with condemnation. God's Word says, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." You don't have to walk in condemnation. You confess your sins and He is faithful and just to forgive you and the Blood of Jesus will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. You don't have to walk with condemnation. You don't have to walk in guilt. You don't have to walk with a sense of failure. Thank God for the failure that He has sent into your lives so that He can humble you, He can prove you. He can hide you; He can work His life into you.

O Father, we surrender. We surrender this morning. O Father, 10 years, O Lord, You have spoken week after week faithfully from this pulpit and we believe that, Lord, You have spoken to us this morning. You have spoken to Me, Lord. You spoke to me. Father, You have been speaking to me, O Lord, and I believe that You are speaking to every one of us in this Church. Father, the year of destiny, O Lord, is almost going to end. Father, let it not pass us by without us finding out what our destiny is in God. So many decisions that have to be made. So many of them holding on with fear to something which has be let go. God says, "Just let go. Let go that relationship." Let go that bitterness. Forgive. Don't hold on. Husbands, just let go. Forgive your wives. Wives, forgive your husbands. Children, forgive your parents. Parents, forgive your children. Brothers and sisters in Christ, forgive one another as Christ Jesus forgave us. God in Christ forgive us. Let us not hold on to bitter words. Father, do it, O Lord. We just wait in Your presence, this morning. I pray, Lord, that You would touch, Lord. Touch us from the bottom of our hearts. Transform us from inside out, O Lord. Cause is to walk in Your ways. Teach us, O Lord. We surrender, O Lord. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Lord, for this morning. Thank You, Father, for speaking to us. Father, we believe, Father, for great and might things in our lives that You would expand our territory, O Lord, that You would grant us success. Thank You, Father. Make us a blessing. That is the promise of Abraham, O Lord; that You would bless us to be a blessing to many. Father, we believe, O Lord, it is here this year, O Lord; that we will be a blessing, O Lord. O Father, touch us. Touch us, we pray. Thank You, Father, for this time. And I pray, Father, that every one of us, this morning, especially Your children who are going through intense trial, Father, I pray, O Lord, that You would speak to them, O Lord. Father, You empathise with them, O Lord, You are touched by the feelings of our infirmities. You have gone through every trial and every situation that every one of us has gone through, O Lord. You know what we are going through, O Lord. I pray, O Lord, that You would comfort, O Lord; that You would come aside that brother, the sister this morning and You would touch them and comfort, O Lord. O Father, we are going to lean onto You this morning. We want to let go, O Lord.

How God Prepares His Servants!

We want to start afresh. Start afresh, O Lord, this year, O Lord. The old things have passed away; behold, everything, let it be made new in your lives, O Lord. Thank You, Jesus. We praise You, Lord. We worship You Father. We give You glory, honour and thanks. In Jesus' Mighty Name we pray, Amen.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of the Father and the fellowship of Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.