

Articles and Sermons :: Begin the New Year in Faith by Zac Poonen

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As we begin a new year, let us determine to run the race ahead of us with endurance, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith. (Hebrews 12:1, 2). We look to Him and run. We don't stand still. The race of faith is something in which you can't stand still. The time is short and so you have to run. If you fall down, get up and continue running. There are many runners who have fallen down in a race, who got up, continued to run and still came first. So don't get discouraged if you fall down sometimes in your walk with the Lord. Don't lie there. Get up, confess your sin and continue to run.

God planned every day of your life, even before you were born. Psalm 139:16-18 (Living Bible) reads thus: "Lord, you saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I even began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your book. How precious it is, Lord, to realize that You are thinking about me constantly. I can't even count how many times a day Your thoughts turn towards me. And when I awake in the morning, You are still thinking of me."

In God's mind, He has made a plan for every day of your life. He has decided the trials He has planned for you in this new year, to give you a rich spiritual education. He has also written there how He will make the blunders you commit this year to work for our good. He has also planned what you should do during this year. Seek to discover that plan with all your heart.

When Jesus walked on earth, people saw the life of heaven in Him. His compassion, His consideration for others, His purity, His selfless love and His humility were all expressions of the very life of God. The Holy Spirit has now come to bring this life of God and the atmosphere of heaven into our hearts. We have been placed by God on earth to manifest this heavenly life to the world. God wants you to have a foretaste of the joy, peace, love, purity and goodness of heaven in your home and in your church in this coming year.

Jesus lived a heavenly life on this earth. If you fix your eyes on Him and follow Him, then every day of this year will be like a day of heaven on earth for you. Jesus was the happiest man who ever walked on this earth. His happiness came out of doing the will of His Father and not by having an easy way through life. He knew His Father's perfect love and so He joyfully submitted to all that the Father sent His way. That was the secret of His life. To have faith is to believe in a God who is perfect in love and whose plans are all for our good.

Psalm 16:8 says, "I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will never be moved". That was how Jesus lived (Acts 2:25). He was never shaken because He lived in His Father's presence always. And so, He was always full of joy as well (Psalm 16:11). That is how God wants us to live too. Jesus was not interested in finding out the minimum that the Father required from Him, but rather the maximum that He could do for His Father.

Our attitude also should be: "What is the maximum that the Lord can get out of my one earthly life in this coming year?" True spirituality comes through denying our own will and obeying the will of God consistently day after day. It was such a consistent obedience to the Father's will each day that enabled Jesus to be well-pleasing to His Father. We too can be well-pleasing to God if we choose that way each day of this new year.

God wants to bless you by anointing your head with oil in such a way that your cup will overflow in blessing to many others. In Elisha's time, when God filled a poor widow's vessel with oil, she poured it out into the vessels of her neighbours (2 Kings 4:1-7). There is more than enough power and blessing in the anointing of God to bless every single person who comes across your path this year. You can bless your neighbours this year like that widow did. So keep pouring out into the lives of others. The one who waters others will be watered by God Himself (Proverbs 11:25).

When the apostle John was "in the Spirit", he heard the Lord's voice as loud as a trumpet (Rev.1:10). If you live in the Spirit every day of the coming year, you too will hear the Lord's voice clearly every day, guiding you and encouraging you. Keep yourself in the Spirit then every day by being sensitive to sin and by walking humbly before the face of God.