

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG177 – What is Your Future in 2024?

Happy New Year, and welcome to the podcast. As we approach this time of the new year and begin to settle into it, I think there is always that question in our mind, “What will happen during this new year? What will it be like?” I believe we always tend to approach New Year’s Eve and the coming of the new year, and our first days into the new year, with kind of an anticipation, maybe some trepidation, about the approaching of a new year. Many, many people tend to approach the year by creating a list of New Year’s resolutions. I think that concept is because it is sort of an attempt on our part to try and anticipate, or create, or look into, the future, and see what is going to happen, or what we would like to happen.

I think it is hard for us on a human level to face the new year from a sense of really wondering what the new year will bring. It kind of confronts that part of us that really does not like to be out of control, and does not like to be unsure of what will happen. But we all know that we cannot control the future. Maybe that is why people party so hard, because they are trying to forget that. Obviously, within the party atmosphere is a hope for something wonderful in this time of a new year, and it is looking down the road at the whole year of twelve months ahead of us. And I think we really do understand in our hearts that there is a reality to the fact that we do not know, nor can we control, our future; and that is kind of scary for us. So, what I want to try to do in this podcast is give us some sense of surety and sense of security as we do look forward. But first, I want to read a few Scriptures that just really confirm this fact that the future is out of our control.

I will start with Ecclesiastes 8:7. It says, “If no one knows what will happen, who can tell him when it will happen?” That is kind of an appraisal of the new year, in a sense. If you do not know what is going to happen, and none of us do, then we recognize that there is really no one who can tell us when it is going to happen, or how it is going to happen. Again, the Word of God is sort of confirming this fact. Maybe it is a little tongue in cheek, but it is confirming this sense within us that the future is out of our hands, it is out of our control.

Proverbs 27:1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” And we do not. We do not know from day to day what will happen or transpire in our lives, or in the world around us. And once again, we see that as we come to this time of New Year, as we begin the first days or weeks of the new year, it brings alive to us the fact that we do not know what the day may bring forth. We do not know what this is going to be like, and we do not have really any control over it.

I will just read one more Scripture, kind of from the negative side, or maybe it is the reality side, about this idea of future, or the days that are to come. In James the fourth chapter, at verses 13-15, it says,

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”

One good thing about James is that it ends kind of on a correct focus. What do we do about the fact that we cannot control tomorrow? We do not know what tomorrow is going to be like. We do not understand what will happen in our life or in the world around us; and there is this reality that we are but a vapor, and we could be here today and gone tomorrow. But James brings us back to something very important, and that is, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

So, how do we really want to begin this new year? I think we begin it with a focus upon the Lord. I think we bring it to the Lord. We bring our lives before the Lord and we say, "Lord, we want to be an offering unto You. We do not know what will happen. We are not in control. You are the Lord, You are the King; You are the one who is in control of our lives, of every breath that we take. And so, the way we approach this new year is by coming before You, saying, 'We dedicate our lives to You. We dedicate each day, from day to day, unto You – to Your will for us, to Your will on this planet, and to Your will in bringing forth Your Kingdom in the earth.'" So, I like what James does of not just pointing out what we do not have and what we are not capable of doing; but he points us in the direction that we need to go.

Now, I said I was going to try to present something that would give us a sense of assurance and security, despite the fact that we are not in control. I want to do that by going to Romans the eighth chapter, and I will begin reading at verses 28-31.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

These are wonderful words as we approach a new year, and they are words of truth. They are words that should bring to us a sense of security. God causes all things to work together for our good. We may not know what is going to happen from day to day; we may have no control over what will happen from day to day; but we do know these things for a fact, because they are established for us in the Word of God: He is working all things together for good for those who love Him. We also know that He has predestined us. We are not just in this world with no plan – if He has predestined us, I would say He has a plan. He has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

We can look at this new year and ask, "What will it hold for us? What will happen in this new year?" Well, one of the things we know will happen is that we will become more and more like Yeshua. As He is, so are we in this world. We are going to be in a process of being conformed to His image, so that He will be the firstborn among many brethren. Verse 30 says, "These whom He predestined, He also called." We are called. We are not just here living a life; we have been called by God with a purpose. More than just the purpose of the fact that He is conforming us to the image of Yeshua, His Son; but He has called us to be His representatives to accomplish His will in this world.

"And these whom He called, He also justified." He is always in the process of justifying us, of perfecting us, of sanctifying us. He is also in the process of having His glory dwell upon us, and be within us. He gave that in John 17. Before He went to the cross, he said to the Father, "My glory I have given to them." So we know that His glory is here, surrounding us, dwelling within us, and available to us, on a daily basis. We may face difficult days. We may face difficult months. But He is with us. He has called us, and His glory is resting upon us and moving within us, as we are being conformed to the image of the Son.

Verses 31-33, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies."

These are heavy, heavy words. Again, I want them to minister something of an assurance, of a security to us, of a faith that carries us through into a future which we do not have control over. We do not, but He does. And we know that He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us; and because He did that, we also can be assured that He in Christ will freely give us all things. Whatever we will need as we go through the days ahead, He will give to us that which we need.

We may face persecutions; we may face things that come against us. But He says, "Who can bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies." It is God who is in the process of justifying us, of conforming us to the image of His Son. So, whatever anybody else will say, or do, or however this age may try to come against us, we know that it will not be effective because God is the one who is for us. And if God is for us, who really can effectively come against us?

Verse 34 says, "Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." Boy, we have a lot going for us; and I think that needs to be a strength, it needs to be alive and real. I think we need to sit down with these words as we enter this new year, and we need to read this. We need to pray over it. We need to have it be so real in our hearts that as we are moving through this year, these words cannot be stolen from us. They cannot be forgotten. They cannot be minimized in our thinking and in our hearts. They have to be alive; it has to be absolutely real to us. Maybe it is something that we should start every day with: If we cannot know the future, we can know these things are our reality.

So, we come into this revelation that He not only died for us, but He was raised for us. And as we live in this year, as we move into this future which is unknown, we know that we live with a resurrected Christ who is beaming towards us the power of that resurrection; who has been taken to the right hand of God and who lives in intercession for us. We have a lot to look forward to in this year.

Going on with verses 35-36, it says, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" This I want to make as probably the most major point of this podcast: there has to be the reality in your mind that you cannot be separated from the love of God, you cannot be separated from the love of Christ. All of these things that are being proclaimed here come to us because of God's love for us, because of Christ's love, and there is nothing that can separate us.

Now we are going to go through these verses and look at many things that have the potential to separate us; and some of these things we may face in this year to come. But it must be real. I ask you to sit and wait upon the Lord until His love for you is something that just blows you away, and it is without question in your heart and mind that He loves you.

Who will separate us from that love? "Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'" Sometimes it feels that way, like we are not going to survive what it is that we are going through. But again, He is asking this question: "What can separate us?" And really, only in our hearts can we be separated. Only in our own minds can we let go of the knowledge of the love that God has for us. Nothing can separate us. Nothing can take away His love. It is up to us not to let go of the knowledge, the revelation, of His love, and how much He does love us.

Going on at verses 38-39, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What is your future this year? This is your future, that nothing can separate you from the love of God. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Nothing. This we have to look forward to. This is better than any New Year’s resolution that we can concoct in our minds in order to try to soothe the over the fact that we really, many times, face with fear and concern a new year, because we do not know what it holds. We try to party away whatever fears we might have. But I’ll tell you, this verse is better than any resolution, or any party that we can throw, to try to make ourselves feel good about a coming year. No created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in and expressed through Christ Jesus our Lord. I love this. I want this to be real to you. I want it to be real to all of us as we go into this year.

I want to read one other verse, but please, don’t let go of this. This is the point of this podcast right here: “No created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” But I feel like there is also some assurance in Jeremiah 29, verse 11, where God Himself says, ““For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.””

We may not know the future. We may not be able to see the future. But God knows the plans. He does have a plan. Remember the earlier verses in Romans: we are called, we have a calling in this world. And God is saying, ““Listen, I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord.” When we read this in Hebrew, it says “plans for *Shalom, lo ra’ah*.” Plans for Shalom: Shalom, the completeness, the fullness, the blessing – and no evil. That is what is within His plans for you. Plans to give you a future and a hope. We may not know the future, but God does. He has this year planned out for you, and it is filled with hope. It is filled with His Presence, His glory.

I hope that we can let these words live in our hearts, and that we let nothing, as we go through this year, separate us from the love that God has for us, which is expressed to us in the love of Christ.

I bless this new year. Sincerely, happy New Year. God has a future and a plan for you, and it will be filled with hope and filled with His Presence.

Amen.