

Facing The New Year

Today is the first Sunday of the new year. We are 6 days into a new year, how are you doing so far?

I want to share with you some funny New Year's resolution tweets that I read this week.

- 1. I'd love to say new year, new me but I'm only two stamps away from a free meal with my KFC loyalty card. It would be silly to ruin that now.**
- 2. My New Year's resolution is to work on my low self-esteem, but I don't think I can do it.**
- 3. My New Year's resolution is to try to worry less, and fill that time with, oh no what am I supposed to fill that time with, this is already going terribly.**

Let me ask you a few questions this morning: What do you anticipate for this year? Are you full of enthusiasm, looking forward to what each day will bring? Or are you filled with a sense of dread, worried that this year will be worse than the last year?

Can I suggest that your attitude, your frame of mind, your reaction to its events will largely determine that this year is a year of victory or a year of defeat.

The Apostle Paul was never one to let circumstances conquer him. Through God's strength he was determined to win. Listen to his attitude in ***Philippians 3:12-14*** ***"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."***

Here are 3 things I want us to learn from Paul's words today.

1. Recognize The Value Of Time.

And each day there 24 hours, 1440 minutes, 86,400 seconds and everyone of them is a gift from God. Time is something we feel we never have enough of, yet we give it away so easily. Someone once said, time is free

but it's priceless. You cannot own it, but you can use it. You cannot keep it, but you can spend it. Once you've lost it you can never get it back.

How do we value one year? Ask a student who failed a grade. How do we value one month? Ask a mother whose baby arrived prematurely. How do we value one week? Editors of weekly newspapers know. How do we value one hour? Ask someone who is terminally ill waiting on a loved one to show up. How do we value one minute? Ask someone who missed their flight or an important meeting that would never be rescheduled. How do we value a second? Ask an Olympic Medalist, or someone who just narrowly missed being in a car accident.

Hebrews 3:15 says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." Today is always the right time to get started! So, we first need to recognize the value of time.

2. Don't Be In Bondage To The Past.

Paul said, ***"But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead."***

Your memory can be your best friend or your worst enemy. Maybe this past year was a year of transition in your life, the kids grew up and married. Maybe your job came to an end and your having a tough time paying the bills. Maybe a loved one died, and you are trying to deal with lingering grief and loneliness. Or maybe it was a time when sin got a real hold onto your life and you now feel the burden and guilt of that sin. Or maybe this is your first time in church in a while because, well, you fill in the blank on that one.

These things can cripple us and keep us chained to the past. That is why Paul said, ***"Forgetting what is behind."*** Paul had a lot to forget because he had a very dark past. He persecuted the church. He used his authority to kill Christians. By his own admission he said he was, ***"the chief of sinners."*** He could have walked around all his life with this tremendous burden of guilt but instead he said, "Forgetting what is behind."

In other words, he was saying, God, I commit it to you. I ask your forgiveness for the sins of my past, help me to own it and make it right as I look forward to what lies ahead. You can't look forward to what lies ahead when you are stuck looking

back in your past. Remember there is no future in the past so stop living there and move forward in Jesus name.

3. Lastly, We Need To Establish Priority's In Your Lives.

Paul said it this way, ***"This one thing I do."*** Now, Paul did a lot of different things but his top priority in his life was to press on forward to the goal to win the prize for which God has called him heavenward in Christ Jesus.

A while back an expert of time management was speaking to a group of business students and he used this illustration to teach the value of priorities.

The truth that this illustration teaches us is this: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all.

Each day drawing nearer to God, spending time with him in prayer and seeking his guidance for your life through His Word.

It was Jesus who said in ***Matthew 6:33 "Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."***