

Challenges of the New Year

Philippians 3:12-14

INTRODUCTION:

- A. “Happy New Year” And congratulations!
1. Your car just depreciated another \$1,000.
 2. Your new clothes are now last year’s clothes.
 3. You are going to have another birthday.
 4. Your roof, heating & cooling unit are one year closer to having to be replaced.
 5. You are going to have to start gathering information and being preparing your federal income tax returns.
 6. You have just paid a whole lot of interest on a debt while reducing very little of the principle.
 7. You are one year nearer death . . .and eternity.
- B. Stephen Leacock once wrote: “How strange is our little possession called life. The child says, ‘When I am big . . . ‘And then, grown up, he or she says, ‘When I am married.’ But then the thought turns to ‘When I am able to retire.’ Then when retirement comes, we look back over the landscape traversed. A cold wind blows over it. Somehow we have missed it all, and it is gone. Life, we learn too late, is in the living, in the tissue of every day and hour.”
- C. What a depressing introduction to a sermon But isn’t that the way many people are thinking about the New Year . . . negatively with a sense of defeatism rather than viewing the New Year as:
1. In this year of grace, 2006 . . .
 2. We have survived another 365 day battle in life and God has rewarded us with a New Year.
 3. A New Year:
 - a. For new beginnings.
 - b. For new challenges.
 - c. For new opportunities.
 - d. For new potentials.
 - e. For new friendships.
 - f. For new expansions to your life.
 - g. For new changes you have been wanting.
 - h. For new adventures you have long sought.
 - i. For new good that you can serve up to others.
 - j. For new accomplishments that will contribute to a fuller and more meaningful life.
 - k. For new works you can accomplish for the Master.

D. A new year full of possibilities and opportunities.

1. 12 months.
2. 52 weeks.
3. 365 days.
4. 8,760 hours.
5. 525,600 minutes.
6. And 31,536,000 seconds What will you do with all that time?

E. **Philippians 3:12-14** – “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

1. Paul said that his goal was:

- a. To know Christ.
- b. To be like Christ.
- c. To be all Christ had in mind for him.

2. He devoted all his energies to accomplishing that . . . An so should we.

F. Poem: **A New Leaf**

He came to my desk, with a quivering lip
 The lesson was done
 Have you a new leaf for me, teacher.
 I have spoiled this one
 I took his leaf, all soiled and blotted
 And gave him a new one, all unspotted.
 Then into his stirred heart I smiled
 “Do better now my child.”

I went to the throne with a trembling heart
 The year was done.
 Have you a new year for me, Father
 I have spoiled this one.
 He took my year, all soiled and blotted
 And gave me a new one, all unspotted
 And into my tired heart He smiled,
 “Do better now, my child.”

G. Definition of “Resolution” – “A course of action decided upon; a fixed purpose.”

1. Resolutions are easy to make . . . They are harder to keep.
 2. Perhaps you know that from experience.
- H. Top Ten New Year Resolutions.
1. Spend more time with family and friends.
 2. Fitness . . . Be more fit, physically speaking.
 3. Tame the bulge. 55% of all Americans are overweight.
 4. Quit smoking.
 5. Enjoy life more.
 6. Quit drinking.
 7. Get out of debt.
 8. Learn something new.
 9. Help others.
 10. Get organized
- I. According to a government web site, popular New Year’ Resolutions include such areas as:
1. Drink less alcohol
 2. Eat less
 3. Get a better education
 4. Get a better job
 5. Loose weight
 6. Quit smoking now
 7. Reduce stress on-the-job
 8. Reduce stress overall
 9. Save money
 10. Take a trip
 11. Volunteer to help others.
- J. Each New Year’s Resolution is in itself a challenge.
1. A challenge for change.
 2. A challenge for improvement.
 3. A challenge for a higher level of success.
 4. A challenge for more effort and determination.
 5. A challenge for accomplishment.
- Nothing wrong with these!
- K. Many resolutions are outward manifestations rather than inward improvements. As you may well know, treating symptoms is not a real cure... It only brings temporary relief.
- L. Three great challenges for the New Year.
1. Be a disciple of Jesus.
 2. Be a peacemaker for Jesus.
 3. Be a servant of Jesus.

I CHALLENGE YOU TO BE A DISCIPLE OF JESUS.

- A. Not part time . . . But full time.

B. A disciple is a “learner” . . . an apprentice, if you please.

C. Three exemplary passages:

1. **John 12:21** - Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus. **Here is a desire for discipleship.**
2. **Acts 4:13** - Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. **Here is an evidence of discipleship.**
 - a. A changed life convinces people of Christ's power.
 - b. Your changed life can help change others.
3. **Romans 10:9-10** – That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. **Here is an open avenue for gaining discipleship . . . A willingness to do what is necessary.**

D. Discipleship is more than being saved from past sins . . . It involves conforming one's life into the image of Jesus Christ. **Romans 8:29** – 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.

1. God purposed that His people would serve and honor Him.
2. Faithful disciples do serve and honor God.

I CHALLENGE YOU TO BE A PEACEMAKER.

- A. **Matthew 5:9** – (7th of the 9 Beatitudes) Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.
- B. **Matthew 12:25** - But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.
 1. There has always been a need for peacemakers.
 2. There will always be a need for peacemakers.
 3. Peace helps . . . division hurts.
- C. **Ephesians 4:1-3** - I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,
 - 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,
 - 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

I CHALLENGE YOU TO BE A SERVANT.

- A. **Luke 17:7-10** - And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep,

will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'?

8 But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'?

9 Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

1. Do you sometimes feel that you deserve extra credit for serving God?

2. Obedience is not something “extra” we do . . . It is our duty.

3. Faithfulness is not something “extra” we do . . . it is our duty.

B. What not to expect as a servant . . . Not goals for the servant.

1. Popularity

2. Power

3. Respect

4. Ego

5. Thanks

C. What to expect as a servant.

1. An opportunity to develop Christ-likeness.

2. An opportunity to leave a godly heritage for one’s family.

3. An opportunity for a great reward in Heaven.

4. An opportunity to save souls and help in the spiritual development of others.

5. An opportunity to please God as never before.

D. Servants serve. When servants serve, others are helped and God is glorified.

CONCLUSION:

A. Brethren, you are challenged you to:

1. Be a **disciple** of Jesus.

2. Be a **peacemaker**.

3. Be a **servant**.

B. If we will step up and meet these challenges in this New Year of 2006 . . .

1. We will be better off for our having done so.

Your spiritual life and spiritual growth will be better off for your having done so.

2. Our congregation will be better off for our having done so.

3. The Lord’s work will be better off for our having done so.

C. Charles Sheldon’s Book - “In His Steps.” (Written in 1896 . . . More than 30 million copies in print). In simple style, **In His Steps** tells the story of self-satisfied congregants of a midwestern church who are challenged by a tramp during a Sunday service to live up to their declaration of faith. The tramp then dies in their midst. So moved are the minister and his parishioners that they pledge to live their lives for one year asking themselves, “What would Jesus do?” Their example how they suffered, faced ridicule and emerged victorious inspires other churches throughout the country to do the same. Make a commitment to ask, “What would Jesus Do?”

D. **Ecclesiastes 3:15** – “That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past.

E. “I went to the throne with a trembling heart
The year was done.
Have you a new year for me, Father
I have spoiled this one.
He took my year, all soiled and blotted
And gave me a new one, all unspotted
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E. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**