

THE PULPIT

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

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NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

MAKE A PROMISE TO YOURSELF. TODAY BEGINS A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO PUT SOME THINGS IN PLACE IN YOUR LIFE. DON'T CARRY THE DEFEATING PATTERNS OF YOUR PAST INTO THE NEW YEAR. HERE ARE SOME SCRIPTURAL POINTS THAT GUARANTEE YOU SUCCESS IN THE NEXT MILLENNIUM:

- ⇒ **DEFINE THE SPECIFIC GOAL YOU WANT TO REACH.** HOW MUCH ARE YOU WILLING TO SACRIFICE TO ACHIEVE IT? YOUR ANSWER WILL DETERMINE YOUR FUTURE. ESTABLISH YOUR PRIORITIES AND REFUSE TO LET ANYTHING OR ANYBODY SIDE-TRACK YOU. LISTEN, "...THIS ONE THING I DO... I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK..." (PHIL 3:13-14)
- ⇒ **CHART A DETAILED COURSE AND ESTABLISH DEADLINES.** PLAN YOUR WORK AND WORK YOUR PLAN. LIST THE THINGS YOU NEED TO DO. SET UP REGULAR CHECKPOINTS. BE ACCOUNTABLE TO SOMEONE. ORGANISE YOUR DAY OR SOMEBODY ELSE WILL. THE BIBLE SAYS, "... WALK ... MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME..." (EPH. 5:15-16).
- ⇒ **VISUALISE YOURSELF ATTAINING YOUR GOAL.** START THINKING NOW LIKE THE PERSON YOU EXPECT TO BE THEN. GOD "... CALLETH THOSE THINGS WHICH BE NOT AS THOUGH THEY WERE" (ROM. 4:17). SEE YOURSELF AS A WINNER, THEN START ACTING AND TALKING LIKE ONE.
- ⇒ **STAY INFORMED.** DON'T BE A TYPEWRITER IN THE AGE OF COMPUTERS. SWITCH OFF YOUR TELEVISION BEFORE YOUR BRAIN FOSSILISES. BECOME A READER! PAUL TOLD TIMOTHY, "... GIVE ATTENDANCE TO READING..." (1 TIM. 4:13). THAT IS WHAT PRODUCED NEW LIFE IN SARAH'S DEAD WOMB, AND CALMED THE STORM ON GALILEE. JESUS SAID, "YOU CAN'T LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, YOU MUST HAVE MY WORD" (MATT 4:4).
- ⇒ **PRAY NO MATTER HOW BUSY YOU ARE!** IF YOU DO, GOD PROMISES TO "DIRECT YOU" (PROV 3:6). THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'DRIFTING' AND BEING 'DIRECTED', IS IN "ACKNOWLEDGING HIM."
- ⇒ **TELL YOUR FAMILY YOU LOVE THEM!** IF YOU FEEL AWKWARD, READ YOUR BIBLE AND SEE HOW OFTEN GOD SAYS IT TO YOU, THEN TAKE A LEAF OUT OF HIS BOOK.
- ⇒ **OPEN YOURSELF TO NEW RELATIONSHIPS!** GOD SAYS, "I WILL BLESS THEE... AND I WILL MAKE THEE A BLESSING" (GEN. 12:3). YOU ARE THE CARRIER OF SOMEBODY ELSE'S BLESSINGS. IF YOU SHUT THE DOOR TO BLESSINGS GOING OUT, YOU'VE ALSO SHUT IT TO BLESSINGS COMING INTO YOUR LIFE.
- ⇒ **KEEP YOURSELF IN "TOP SHAPE."** WHEN GOD NEEDED SOMEONE TO LEAD SAUL OF TARSUS TO CHRIST, ANANIAS SAID, "I AM HERE LORD." (ACTS 9:10) CAN YOU SAY THAT? BE READY AND AVAILABLE FOR WHAT GOD WANTS TO DO IN THE NEW YEAR.
- ⇒ **MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE!** DOMINATE YOUR TURF WITH FAITH. WHEN THE CONVERSATION TURNS NEGATIVE, STEER IT BACK TO POSITIVE "WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE GOOD" (PHIL 4:8). MAKE THESE YOUR LIFESTYLE! GOD SAYS, "I HAVE PLACED BEFORE YOU AN OPEN DOOR".

WHEN GOD SAYS "NO"!

IF IT WAS A GOOD THING, GOD WOULD NOT HAVE SAID, "NO"! EITHER THE TIMING IS WRONG OR HE KNOWS IT WOULD ROB YOU OF YOUR GREATER DESTINY. THE ISSUE IS — DO YOU TRUST HIM? REAL PRAISE COMES WHEN YOU REALISE WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED BUT DIDN'T BECAUSE GOD INTERVENED ON YOUR BEHALF. STOP TRYING TO BREAK LOOSE FROM THE LOVING GRIP OF THE ONE WHO HOLDS YOU FOR YOUR OWN PROTECTION. JUST SUBMIT; HE WON'T FAIL YOU!

PETER CALLS JESUS "THE SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF OUR SOULS" (1 PETER 2:25). A BISHOP IS JUST AN OVERSEER. WHAT A PICTURE: GOD WATCHING OVER YOU! HE'S LIKE A LIFEGUARD AT THE BEACH. TO SAVE YOU, HE'LL INTERRUPT THE FESTIVITIES, EMBARRASS YOU IN FRONT OF YOUR FRIENDS, AND MAYBE EVEN BRUISE A RIB OR TWO — BUT HE LOVES YOU TOO MUCH TO LET YOU DROWN IN THE VERY THING YOU THINK IS SO GOOD FOR YOU.

BILLY GRAHAM'S WIFE, RUTH, SAYS, "IF GOD HAD SAID YES TO ALL MY PRAYER REQUESTS, I'D HAVE MARRIED THE WRONG MAN — SEVERAL TIMES." SOUND FAMILIAR? "COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD; TRUST ALSO IN HIM AND HE SHALL BRING IT TO PASS" (PS 37:5). WHAT YOU'RE BITTER ABOUT TODAY, YOU'LL BLESS GOD FOR IT TOMORROW.

MARK TWAIN SAID THAT WHEN HE WAS 14, HIS FATHER SEEMED SO IGNORANT HE COULDN'T STAND HIM. BUT WHEN HE WAS 21, HE WAS AMAZED HOW MUCH THE OLD MAN HAD LEARNED! THE MORE YOU MATURE SPIRITUALLY, THE MORE YOU'LL BEGIN TO SEE HOW LOVING AND WISE YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS.

TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT YOUR HABITS

ANY HABIT YOU KEEP FEEDING WILL STRENGTHEN ITS GRIP ON YOUR LIFE. ASK ANY RECOVERING ALCOHOLIC; THEY USUALLY CHANGE ONLY WHEN THEY 'HIT THE BOTTOM.' "PRODIGALS DON'T COME HOME UNTIL THEY LOSE EVERYTHING (LUKE 15:11-32). BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT GOD IS WAITING TO WELCOME YOU BACK AND RESTORE YOU TO FULL SONSHIP IN HIS FAMILY. COME ON, YOU'RE A CHILD OF THE MOST HIGH. CAPTIVITY IS UNNATURAL FOR YOU! YOU'LL NEVER BE FREE UNTIL YOU DESPISE YOUR CHAINS. WHETHER YOU'RE BOUND BY A SUBSTANCE, A RELATIONSHIP, OR JUST A LIFE THAT'S 'OUT OF ORDER' — YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES WON'T CHANGE UNTIL YOUR MIND IS RELEASED FROM OLD THOUGHT-PATTERNS AND RENEWED BY GOD'S WORD (ROM. 12:2).

ITS TIME TO INSTITUTE SOME NEW HABITS, FOR WHAT YOU DO HABITUALLY, YOU'LL BECOME PERMANENTLY. BEGIN THE BIBLE READING HABIT. PICK A TIME THAT'S BEST. PUT IT FIRST ON YOUR DAILY 'TO DO' LIST OR YOU'LL NEVER DO IT CONSISTENTLY. READ ALOUD, AND YOU WON'T GET DISTRACTED SO EASILY. LISTEN, "THOSE WHO DISCOVER THESE WORDS LIVE, REALLY LIVE; BODY AND SOUL, THEY'RE BURSTING WITH HEALTH" (PROV. 4:22). SET A SPECIFIC TIME TO PRAY. IF YOU DON'T, EVERYTHING ELSE WILL CROWD IT OUT. AS YOU LEARN TO WAIT IN PRAYER, GOD WILL TELL YOU HOW HE FEELS ABOUT THINGS. ATTEND CHURCH REGULARLY. SUPPORT IT WITH YOUR TITHES AND DEVELOP GODLY RELATIONSHIPS. THERE ARE THINGS GOD WILL SAY TO YOU IN HIS HOUSE THAT HE WON'T SAY TO YOU ANYWHERE ELSE" (HEB. 10:25). YOUR DAILY HABITS ARE CARVING OUT YOUR FUTURE, FOR GOOD OR BAD. ARE YOU HEADING TOWARD WHAT YOU WANT?

THE PULPIT Series — Print, Read and Pass it on to others (2 Pages)

ARE YOU PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE?

YOUR INCOME-PRODUCING YEARS ARE LIMITED, SO MOVE WHILE YOU CAN! "TAKE A LESSON FROM THE ANTS...THEY LABOUR HARD ALL SUMMER, GATHERING FOOD FOR THE WINTER" (PROV. 6:6-8). TOO MANY CHRISTIANS THINK THAT ANY MENTION OF MONEY IS 'CARNAL', AND SO END UP ENSNARED BY POOR PLANNING AND MISGUIDED SPIRITUALITY. NOW, OLD AGE AND LOST INCOME HAVE LEFT THEM SADDLED WITH BILLS THEY CAN'T PAY AND CHILDREN WHO CAN'T TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES, MUCH LESS THEIR AGEING PARENTS. POVERTY IS A SILENT PRISON THAT NEEDS NO WALLS AND NO CHAINS; IT LOCKS MANY IN WITHOUT OPTIONS AND WITHOUT HOPE.

SOLOMON SAYS, "A GOOD MAN LEAVES AN INHERITANCE FOR HIS CHILDREN'S CHILDREN..." (PROV 13:22). DON'T ALLOW ANYBODY TO CONVINCE YOU THAT GOD MINDS YOU HAVING MONEY. HE DOESN'T — HE JUST MINDS MONEY HAVING YOU! HE'S A PROVIDER, AND HE EXPECTS YOU TO BE ONE TOO (1 TIM 5:8). NOTE: GOD CAN BLESS YOUR PLAN ONLY IF YOU HAVE A PLAN FOR HIM TO BLESS. DO YOU? ONE ILLNESS OR ONE ACCIDENT CAN ROB YOU OF ALL YOU HAVE. ONE LONG-TERM INJURY CAN CHANGE LIFE AS YOU NOW KNOW IT. JOBS END AND COMPANIES CLOSE; STOCKS FALL AND INVESTMENTS FAIL. THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD AVOID INVESTING, PLANNING, OR WORKING. IT JUST MEANS THAT AFTER YOU'VE DONE ALL THAT WISDOM DEMANDS, TRUST IN NOTHING BUT GOD! HE'S STILL YOUR SOURCE, YOUR PROTECTOR, YOUR SUSTAINER AND THE GIVER OF EVERY GOOD INCOME-PRODUCING IDEA YOU'LL EVER HAVE (PHIL. 4:19). THINK ABOUT IT!

GRACE BE UNTO YOU

THINGS THAT CONQUER OTHERS WON'T CONQUER YOU IF YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN THE GRACE TO HANDLE THEM! HOW COULD PAUL PERSEVERE THROUGH BEATINGS, BETRAYAL, SHIPWRECKS AND IMPRISONMENT? LISTEN, "...THEN HE TOLD ME, 'MY GRACE IS ENOUGH; IT'S ALL YOU NEED. MY STRENGTH COMES INTO ITS OWN IN YOUR WEAKNESS'" (2 COR 12:9). GRACE WILL ENABLE YOU TO PASTOR IN A DIFFICULT AREA, CARE FOR AN AGED LOVED ONE WHO REQUIRES MUCH TIME AND PATIENCE, PRAY AND NEVER LET GO OF A PRODIGAL SON OR DAUGHTER AND WORK WITH JOY IN A MISERABLE ENVIRONMENT.

WHEN DOES GRACE COME? WHEN YOU NEED IT MOST LISTEN, "...AND WE WILL FIND GRACE TO HELP US WHEN WE NEED IT." (HEB 4:16). GOD WILL NOT GIVE YOU TOMORROW'S GRACE TODAY, BUT WHEN YOU WAKE UP IN THE MORNING, IT'LL BE THERE — GRACE, EQUAL TO EVERY NEED. ONE OF THE GREATEST MISTAKES YOU CAN MAKE IS TO ENVY SOMEONE ELSE OR TRY TO BE LIKE THEM. WHY? BECAUSE YOU MAY HAVE EQUAL TALENT, BUT UNLESS YOU ARE EQUALLY 'GRACED,' YOU WON'T SUCCEED. OUR PRAYER FOR YOU TODAY IS — GRACE BE UNTO YOU (PHIL. 1:2).

3 REASONS WHY YOU NEED JESUS

- FIRST, BECAUSE YOU HAVE A PAST. YOU CAN'T GO BACK, BUT JESUS CAN. THE BIBLE SAYS, "JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOR EVER" (HEB. 13:8). HE CAN GO BACK INTO THOSE PLACES OF SIN AND FAILURE AND BRING FORGIVENESS. HE CAN WIPE THE SLATE CLEAN AND GIVE YOU A NEW BEGINNING.
- SECOND, BECAUSE YOU NEED A FRIEND. JESUS KNOWS THE WORST ABOUT YOU, YET HE BELIEVES THE BEST. WHY? BECAUSE HE SEES YOU, NOT AS YOU ARE, BUT AS YOU WILL BE WHEN HE GETS THROUGH WITH YOU. WHAT A FRIEND!
- THIRD, BECAUSE HE HOLDS THE FUTURE. WHO ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO TRUST? IN HIS HANDS YOU ARE SAFE AND SECURE — TODAY, TOMORROW, AND FOR ALL ETERNITY. HIS WORDS SAYS, "FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU, SAYS THE LORD. THEY ARE PLANS FOR GOOD AND NOT FOR EVIL, TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE AND A HOPE. IN THOSE DAYS WHEN YOU PRAY, I WILL LISTEN" (JEREMIAH 29:11-13).

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST TODAY, YOU CAN PRAY THE FOLLOWING PRAYER. DEAR GOD, I KNOW I AM A SINNER. I BELIEVE JESUS DIED TO FORGIVE ME OF MY SINS. I NOW ACCEPT YOUR OFFER OF ETERNAL LIFE. THANK YOU FOR FORGIVING ME OF ALL MY SIN. THANK YOU FOR MY NEW LIFE. FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, I WILL CHOOSE TO FOLLOW YOU. WE WANT TO HELP YOU GROW AS A NEW CHRISTIAN. WRITE TO "THE PULPIT" THROUGH OUR ADDRESS WRITTEN ON THE FRONT PAGE OR CALL ANY OF THE NUMBERS LISTED BELOW.

ARE YOU CONFUSED?

A PREACHER ASKED GOD ONE DAY WHY SO MANY PEOPLE WERE STRUGGLING WITH CONFUSION. GOD SAID TO HER, "TELL THEM TO STOP TRYING TO FIGURE EVERYTHING OUT, AND THEY'LL STOP BEING CONFUSED!" WHAT AN ANSWER! A LOT OF US NEED TO BE DELIVERED FROM "TRYING TO FIGURE EVERYTHING OUT." DOES THAT INCLUDE YOU? GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION — 1 COR. 14:33. YOUR MIND IS THE BATTLEFIELD WHERE THE WAR IS EITHER WON OR LOST. PAUL WRITES, "FOR THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT CANAL, BUT MIGHTY THROUGH GOD TO THE PULLING DOWN OF STRONGHOLDS; CASTING DOWN IMAGINATIONS... BRINGING INTO CAPTIVITY EVERY THOUGHT" (2 COR. 10:4-5). WHAT ARE WE TO CAST DOWN? IMAGINATIONS. WHY BECAUSE WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE ANSWERS, YOUR IMAGINATION WILL PAINT THE WORST POSSIBLE PICTURE AND DRIVE YOU CRAZY. WHAT ARE WE TO TAKE CAPTIVE? THOUGHTS! WHY? BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR THOUGHTS, THEY'LL KEEP YOU IN TORMENT.

IF GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION, THEN GUESS WHO IS? YOUR ENEMY! HE WANTS TO ROB YOU OF YOUR PEACE OF MIND AND KEEP YOU CONSTANTLY CONFUSED BY TRYING TO FIGURE EVERYTHING OUT. YOU ASK, "WHAT CAN I DO?" DO THIS: WHEN QUESTIONS ARISE, IT'S OK TO PONDER THEM FOR A WHILE BUT THE MOMENT YOU FEEL CONFUSED, IMMEDIATELY BEGIN TO THANK GOD THAT HE HAS THE ANSWER AND THAT YOU TRUST HIM COMPLETELY TO SHOW IT TO YOU WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT. ISAIAH SAYS, "THOU WILT KEEP HIM IN PERFECT PEACE, WHOSE MIND IS STAYED ON THEE: BECAUSE HE TRUSTETH IN THEE." (ISA. 26:3) SARAH UTTERBACH SAYS, "HE CAN ONLY BE YOUR PEACE WHEN HE IS YOUR CONSTANT FOCUS." THINK ABOUT IT!

DON'T GIVE UP!

THE THEME OF CHRISTIANITY IS RISING AGAIN! "FOR A JUST MAN FALLETH SEVEN TIMES, AND RISETH UP AGAIN..." (PROV. 24:16). ALLOW THE RESURRECTING POWER OF CHRIST TO OPERATE IN YOUR LIFE REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU HAVE FALLEN INTO SIN OR DISCOURAGEMENT. THE BIBLE SAYS "A JUST MAN" IS SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE HE CONTINUES TO GET UP. GOD WILL ENABLE YOU TO STAND IN THE MIDST OF CONTRARY WINDS AND, WHEN YOU STUMBLE, TO GRASP THE HAND OF HIS GRACE AND GET BACK UP AGAIN. LISTEN, "...THEY THAT STUMBLERED ARE GIRDED WITH STRENGTH" (1 SAMUEL 2:4).

IF YOU'VE A HEART TO ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING FOR GOD, THEN YOU MUST BE RELENTLESS. PAUL SAYS, "THEREFORE, MY DEAR BROTHERS, STAND FIRM, LET NOTHING MOVE YOU. ALWAYS GIVE YOURSELVES FULLY TO THE WORK OF THE LORD..." (1 COR. 15:58). IF YOU'RE THE KIND OF PERSON WHO GIVES UP EASILY, THERE'S NO NEED TO ATTEMPT ANYTHING FOR GOD. RELENTLESS PEOPLE REFUSE TO TAKE 'NO' FOR AN ANSWER. THEY TRY THINGS ONE WAY AND, IF THAT DOESN'T WORK, THEY TRY THEM ANOTHER. BUT THEY DON'T GIVE UP. YOU WHO ARE ABOUT TO BREAK BENEATH THE WEIGHT OF YOUR STRUGGLES, BE RELENTLESS! DON'T GIVE UP ON YOUR FAMILY! DON'T GIVE UP ON YOUR BUSINESS! DON'T GIVE UP ON YOURSELF! A TERRIBLE THING HAPPENS WHEN YOU GIVE UP; IT'S CALLED REGRET. IT'S THE NAGGING THOUGHT THAT "IF ONLY I'D TRIED HARDER. I COULD HAVE SUCCEEDED." GET UP, FOR BY GOD'S GRACE YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE IT!

YOUR CRISIS IS JUST AN OPPORTUNITY

YOU'LL NEVER SUCCEED IF YOU THROW UP YOUR HANDS AND QUIT EVERY TIME SOMETHING GOES WRONG. IT WAS THE TRIALS OF JOB THAT MADE HIM A LEGEND. IT WAS THE LION'S DEN THAT MADE DANIEL A GOVERNOR. IT WAS IMPRISONMENT THAT GAVE PAUL AN OPPORTUNITY TO WRITE THE EPISTLES. LISTEN, "I WANT TO REPORT TO YOU, FRIENDS, THAT MY IMPRISONMENT HERE HAS HAD THE OPPOSITE OF ITS INTENDED EFFECT. INSTEAD OF BEING SQUELCHED, THE MESSAGE HAS ACTUALLY PROSPERED" (PHIL 1:12).

THE PROBLEM THAT INFURIATES YOU THE MOST IS OFTEN THE ONE YOU'VE BEEN CALLED TO SOLVE. SITUATIONS THAT UNLOCK YOUR COMPASSION ARE THE VERY PLACES YOU'LL OFTEN FIND YOUR GREATEST FULFILMENT. GOD DOESN'T WASTE EXPERIENCE. HE CAN TAKE YOUR PAST AND MAKE IT SERVE YOUR FUTURE. HE CAN TURN YOUR MISERY INTO A MINISTRY AND ENABLE YOU TO REACH PEOPLE YOU COULDN'T UNDERSTAND BEFORE, MUCH LESS MINISTER TO. LOOK FOR GOD'S PURPOSES IN THE SETBACKS OF YOUR LIFE, AND YOU'LL TURN THEM INTO STEPPING STONES TO BLESSING.

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