

Christian Evolution

January 1, 2017

by C Benjamin Dill

Good morning, Lighthouse, are you ready for the Word of God this morning? Are you ready for a brand-new year?

Romans 12:1-2

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

There is one thing that even the most worldly of Christians can figure out; that is that **God wants us to change.**

When God saves us, He takes us like we are - but He has no intention of leaving us like we are.

Does that mean that God is not satisfied with us; that He doesn't like us in our present state?

You don't even like you in your present state! Why would you think God would?

God loves us.

Lisa loves me, but I'm pretty sure there are times that she doesn't particularly like me.

When Jesus saved us, He swept into our lives like a lightning bolt and in one mighty instant transformed our spirit.

He brought our spirit from being "dead in sins" to life everlasting; from unrighteous to righteous, from lost to saved...all at once.

The rest, however; the outward changes...they all come by evolution; small changes over time.

Some of these changes are hard, some can be painful, and some come through many failures before we see success.

Of course, God has a motive for wanting us to change; and it's more far reaching than most people think.

1 Peter 1:13-16

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, **Be ye holy; for I am holy.**

10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Brothers and sisters, our Lord wants great and wonderful things for our lives; He wants to bless us greatly.

But most of those blessings are going to come through change; let us learn to embrace those changes instead of fighting them.

As obedient children, yes, we ought to desire to change simply because God wants us to...and He commands it.

But it might not hurt to know why He wants it.

Galatians 3:13-14

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

What does that mean?

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

3 John 1:2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

It means that **God wants to bless you!**

This may be the easiest to agree with God about that you'll ever find.

He wants to bless me...and I want to be blessed.

So, what can I do to help expedite the process?

Our nature is to just live our lives and be moved along, taking the path of least resistance.

Going along to get along.

Doing it like Daddy did it or like Momma did it because that is what we know.

Staying in a mediocre job because it is easier than breaking out and breaking into a new one.

Continuing in bad habits because it is easier than the process of replacing them with good ones.

Change is great and wonderful and profitable, but it is not usually fun and it is almost never easy.

Today is the first day of **a brand new year.**

What a perfect opportunity to think about some real and positive changes in your life; everyone is thinking about their New Year's resolutions, right?

Well, let me remind you that resolve by itself rarely changes anything. Can you even remember your last New Year's resolution?

Isn't there something in your life you really would like to change? (If your answer is no, then you are either lost; you are already as good as Jesus; or you are acting like a fool.)

3. You adjust your plan.

4. And you keep on keeping on.

5. You DON'T keep on doing the same things expecting different results.

Conclusion:

For believers, our plan, whatever it is, is virtually guaranteed to be changed along the way.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

We need to welcome the Lord into our plans.

And we need to embrace His redirection when it comes.

Some would say, "I'm just going to wait on the Lord."

Yes, we must wait on the Lord; but that is not be used as an excuse to embrace the path of least resistance and do nothing about the changes needed in our lives.

Jesus tells us different:

Luke 11:9-10

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

5. It has been proven that nearly anything can become a habit, a literal part of your life, if practiced for at least 40 days.

V. Prepare for disappointment.

A. Every great success is an accumulation of failures learned from.

1. Just look at the great men and women of the Bible.

2. Every one of their lives is an accumulation of disastrous failures.

3. Moses, David, Peter, Rahab, Paul, Matthew; all of them.

4. The only exception is Jesus; and there on the cross, even He sure looked like a failure. (Of course, it only looked that way for about three days).

5. Failure is what thickens our skin and makes us tough and able to stand.

6. The only real way to fail is to quit and give up.

A. So, what do you do when you fail?

1. You re-evaluate.

2. You learn from your mistakes.

Hey, I'm not just talking about overcoming sin; that's what preachers are expected to talk about; but that is not the only thing that our God is interested in.

Maybe you would like to get out of debt?

Maybe you would like to clean up your credit?

Maybe you would like to make a better living for yourself and your family?

Maybe you would like to become a faithful tither?

Maybe you would like to stop smoking or stop drinking or any number of other things harming your body and destroying your testimony for the Lord?

Being a senior pastor (and there are some advantages to having a "senior" pastor); the Lord has taught me some things along the way that can really help you to help the Lord to help you. (Did you get that?)

Without voicing it, I would like you to think of one very specific change that you would like to make in your life in this coming new year.

As we go through this message today, let's apply what you will learn to that individual specific change.

First of all you must:

I. Decide what you really want to change.

A. Be specific.

1. You can't "be a better person".
2. But you can do some specific things that will make you a better person.
3. You can't "make more money"; but you can do some specific things that create more income.
4. Your goal must be: specific, and attainable.

You also must:

B. Be reasonable.

1. By this I do NOT mean to only attempt things that might be easy or small.
2. I mean don't try to change everything that's wrong with you all at once.
3. Choose one specific goal and work on that.
4. Unless you are almost as good as Jesus already, trying to do more is probably not going to happen.

You must also:

C. Be right. (This is especially important).

1. Do it for a righteous reason. (Like love or providing for your family or so that you can have a proper testimony for the Lord.)

3. A plan is a specific set of steps that, when carried out, will accomplish what you set out to do.
4. Once you have developed a plan, then:

IV. Do it.

1. Set a start date and begin.
2. Break it down into small doable steps.
3. Do it well!

1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

- Success is in the details.
- For example; if part of your plan includes a resume to be sent out; make sure it is to proper form, proof read by others who know how; no typos, no poor grammar, no run-on sentences, humble, yet factual.

4. Commit yourself to be the best at what you do.
5. Never give up.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

2. You must prepare yourself to meet the cost of what you set out to change.
3. Change will cost you in time, money, energy and commitment.
4. To accomplish a goal almost always costs more in time, money, patience or energy than we thought it would.
5. Running out of any of these in the middle of a project almost always leads to failure.

Then you must:

III. Develop a plan.

A. You don't have to be original in this.

1. Others have succeeded in what you want to change or to accomplish.
2. Only a prideful fool thinks something is not worth doing unless he thought of it himself.

B. A plan must consist of specific steps.

1. A determination of action is not a plan.
2. A goal is not a plan.

2. It should be legal; but not just legal; it ought to be righteous.

3. Let's say you want to start a business; ask yourself; is it honest, does it take unfair advantage of people?

- bars, night clubs;
- pawn shops, title loans;
- rent centers, gambling;
- abortion clinics.

4. Lots of things are legal - but are anything but righteous.

5. Even if it is righteous, it still has to pay. As a Christian, your time (which is what your life is made of) is of great value.

- a. I have started several businesses over the years; all of which succeeded to a degree.
- b. When they did not pay enough in relation to the time they took up they had to be sold or abandoned.

Also:

D. Don't be afraid.

1. Don't be afraid to think big.
2. If it's a big problem, remind your problem how big your God is.

3. If it's a big opportunity remember:

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

4. I was especially encouraged to hear our new President-elect the other day challenging American businessmen to dream big!

Once you decide what you want to change, then:

II. Determine a course of action.

A. Determine exactly what must change.

1. If your desired change is something like weight loss or smoking or alcohol addiction; those things require a change of lifestyle.

2. If you try to quit smoking or drinking and still hang out with the same people in the same places, it will turn out just like the last time you tried to quit.

3. Maybe your desired change is that your husband would quit smoking; you certainly can pray for him; however,

4. It would be wise to remember that the only one you can really change is you.

5. If you want a better vocation, you must educate yourself to that new vocation.

6. That doesn't necessarily mean going back to a formal school; many companies are willing to train hardworking, dependable people.

7. If you want to start a business; same thing; you must educate yourself to what is required.

8. You may want to get some experience working for someone else in that field.

9. Use the resources God has provided; seek the council of other brothers and sisters who have succeeded in what you want to do.

10. **Proverbs 15:22** Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

B. You must count the cost.

1. **Luke 14:28-32**

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?