

# How to have Your Best New Year

January 1, 2023

## I. Introduction

- A. This is not a sermon about determination or goal setting though both have a proper place.
- B. This is a sermon about your focus, your priorities, and your ultimate goal in life.
- C. The apostle Paul left no room for doubt or speculation as to his ultimate goal in life
  1. “. . . so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.” – Colossians 1:18b
  2. “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” – Philippians 1:21
  3. “That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” – Philippians 3:10
- D. Biblically, success is always measured in terms of faithfulness.
  1. I Corinthians 4:1-5
  2. Moses
- E. Can you control the circumstances of your life?
  1. Yes, to a degree
    - a. Galatians 6:7,8; I Peter 4:15
  2. NO
    - a. Proverbs 27:1; James 4:14
  3. What does the "good" of Romans 8:28 refer to?

## II. Focusing In – James 4:1-10

- A. The current focus of most – vs. 1-4
  1. What is the cause of personal and corporate conflicts?
    - a. A focus on pleasure, personal happiness – v. 1
  2. We are being told by many that we have a right to be happy and should obtain that goal at any cost. – v. 2a
    - a. That is exactly the advice Jezebel gave Ahab in I Kings 21
  3. One reason we do not have what we desire is because we have failed to ask the right person. – v. 2b

- a. Asking demonstrates dependence
        - i. Philippians 4:6
      - b. Asking has conditions
        - i. John 15:7
    4. A second reason we do not have what we desire is our motive is selfish – v. 3
    5. A third reason we do not have what we desire is due to half-hearted devotion to God – v. 4
      - a. The Father loved the world John 3:16
      - b. The Son was a friend to many Matthew 11:19
  - B. The Proper Focus for all – vs. 5-10
    1. Know Him as your Savior – v. 5
      - a. I Corinthians 6:19, 20
    2. Recognize that the Christian life from beginning (Justification) to end (Sanctification) is a work of God for man. – v. 6
      - a. God gives us all that is needed ("He gives a greater grace")
        - i. II Peter 1:2-4
      - b. Humility is seeing myself as God does
        - i. Isaiah 64:6; 41:14
        - ii. Acts 17:28
        - iii. John 15:5
      - c. God honors humility
        - i. Isaiah 66:2
    3. Submit and resist – v. 7
      - a. "Submit": Place yourself under God's authority
        - i. Jesus said it this way:
          - “I always do the things that are pleasing to Him”. – John 8:29
          - “Not My will, but Thine be done.” – Luke 22:42
        - ii. Mary said:

- *"Behold the bondservant of the Lord."* – Luke 1:38
- b. "Resist":
  - i. To say no emphatically. This works with people as well as with the Devil.
- 4. Draw near to God – v. 8a
  - a. Simply put: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus".
    - i. Psalm 16:8; 27:8; II Chronicles 20:12
  - b. There is no greater pleasure, thrill, satisfaction (you choose the adjective) than what this exercise produces. John 14:21; Job 42: 1-6
- 5. That which hinders our drawing near to God – v. 8b
  - a. The passing pleasures of sin - Hebrews 11:25
  - b. A double focus (James 1:8; Matthew 6:24). He must be our exclusive focus
- 6. Things which promote drawing near to God – vs. 9, 10
  - a. Seeing things clearly – v. 9
    - i. Romans 6:17,21
  - b. Humility – v. 10

### III. Conclusion

- A. Solomon was clearly a man with a focus on pleasure and personal satisfaction
  - 1. *"I said to myself, come now I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself. And behold, it too was futility. I said of laughter, it is madness, and of pleasure, what does it accomplish?"* – Ecclesiastes 2:1-2
  - 2. *"Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasure of men-many concubines."* – Ecclesiastes 2:8
  - 3. *"All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure. . ."* – Ecclesiastes 2:10
- B. Yet his final advice was: "Remember"
  - 1. Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13
- C. Grace is living confidently in God's unfailing love
  - 1. Knowing it will never cease
  - 2. Knowing that He does not love me less when I am disobedient or more when I am obedient.

- 3. Knowing that He accepts me just like I am, yet knowing He has great transformation plans for me.
- 4. Knowing that His love, wisdom, and power are too great to attribute to chance, bad luck, or Satan or anything.
- D. That my friend sets you free to be all God would have you be.
  - 1. John 8:31, 32, 36
  - 2. Free to serve and love