

Sunday Morning Message

December 31,

New Year's Eve Message

A Yearly Review

Text – 2 Corinthians 5; Romans 14:1 – 12; 1 Corinthians 3:9 - 15

Congregational Reading – 2 Corinthians 5:6 - 10

Introduction

In many companies, it is a common practice for superiors to bring associates into the office periodically for a review. In the first year of employment, there may be several reviews: at the end of thirty days, three months, and six months. But after the first year, it usually done annually. At this review, there may be a raise given, or there may be a discussion about possible future advancements or promotions. The employer will discuss some of the employee's strengths and weaknesses, and then will instruct him about areas that need to be improved.

This morning, I want to look at a few passages of Scripture that each support the fact that we as believers will someday stand before the Lord and give an account of our lives. This judgment is referred to as the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is not a judgment for sin as the sins of a believer were judged and paid for when Christ died for our sins. Just before Jesus breathed his last breath and gave up the ghost, he said, "It is finished," meaning the debt for our sins was paid in full.

This judgment that we will examine today is not for sins, but it is a judgment of what we did with our lives for the Lord while we were serving Him here on this earth. The believer's life is supposed to given to the service of Christ. We are to learn of Him and glorify Him in all things and are commissioned to communicate with the lost world the gospel of salvation that Christ offers as well as teach the doctrinal and practical life principles that were entrusted to us within His word.

I believe that since at the end of our earthly lives we will all stand before the Lord someday to give an account, perhaps we should all give an account, at least to ourselves once per year to see how we are doing.

Read 2 Corinthians 5

Here in 2 Corinthians five, Paul tells us about his ministry as an ambassador for Christ. He gives us a glimpse into his motivation and shows us also his eternal perspective. In this passage, we will see how Paul viewed the world and how he also viewed himself within God's big picture.

I. An Eternal Perspective [Observation] (vs. 1 – 8)

Paul had witnessed a lot of things in his life. He witnessed and approved the murder of Stephen (Acts 7:58); he may have even witnessed the mock trial and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ (he certainly had heard about it when it happened); he witnessed the Lord on the road to Damascus when he was converted. But perhaps the greatest event Paul had witnessed was when he got to take a little peek into heaven (2 Corinthians 12:1 – 4; Acts 14:8 - 22). Paul's perspective on this life was forever changed by this event. He could no longer look at the things that are temporary. He saw everything with a view towards eternity. It would do us well to take a long, hard look at eternity: at an eternal heaven and an eternal hell; then perhaps we could see people and this world from an eternal perspective. Do we really believe what we say we believe?

A. The Things of this Earth are temporary.

1. Our bodies
2. Our possessions
3. Our wealth

B. The Things of God are Permanent.

Note – God has created (v. 5 *wrought*) us for eternity, not just for this earth.

The wise believer will live his temporary life here on this earth for the things that are eternal. Illustrate - When Lester Roloff died, he did not have enough money in the bank to pay for his funeral. Some said that he was a bad businessman; he claimed that he just kept his money in a different bank.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; (Philippians 1:21-25)

II. An Eternal Promise [Motivation] (vs. 9 – 16)

Paul will now again address the motivation he had to serve the Lord (*Wherefore we labor...*). God has called all His children to be His ambassadors, but why do we do what we do. Here are listed some good reasons and some not so good reasons to serve God. It should be noted however that even if our motivation is not entirely pure, the work that we do will help the cause of Christ, though you may not be rewarded for it.

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. (Philippians 1:15-18)

A. Wrong Reasons

1. Focus on Self – you want to be in the spotlight (3 John 9)
2. Filthy Lucre (1 Peter 5:1 – 3)
3. Fear of People; Guilt (vs. 12 – 13; 16)

B. Right Reasons

1. Obedience
2. Love for People (Romans 9:1 – 3)
3. Love for God
4. Love of God (v. 14)
5. **Rewards (vs. 9 & 10; 1 Corinthians 3: 11 – 15)**
6. New Creature – the working of the Holy Spirit (v. 17)

III. **An Eternal Purpose [Reconciliation] (vs. 17 – 21)**

A. God has Converted Us (*reconciled* v. 18)

*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were **reconciled** to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (Romans 5:8-11)*

B. God has Commissioned Us (vs. 18 – 21)

1. We stand *in Christ's stead* (v. 20) as ambassadors
2. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation.
3. We have been entrusted with the ***word of reconciliation***

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

(Mark 16:15)

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. (Luke 14:21-23)

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:45-49)

We are God's ambassadors. We are supposed to be living our lives for His eternal purpose, and someday, we will give an account to Him regarding what we did with our time down here on the earth.

Notice again vs. 9 – 10

"9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:9-10)

Read Romans 14:1 – 12

In this passage, Paul is discussing Christian liberty and our relationships with each other within the church. He tells us that we need to be tolerant of each other and receive one

another, and he also admonishes us about being judgmental.

Paul stresses the fact that we will all have to answer to God individually. I won't have to give an account for you, and you won't have to give an account for me. Even as a pastor, I will not have to answer for the decisions that the people in my church make. I will only have to answer for what I taught them, and the example that I lead.

The judgement seat of Christ is discussed also in 1 Corinthians 3:

Read 1 Corinthians 3:9 – 15

Twice Paul wrote to the Corinthians about self-examination.

The first time, it was regarding the way they were participating in the Lord's Supper:

"28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." (1 Corinthians 11:28)

The second time, it was an appeal to individuals within the church to examine themselves to see if they were genuinely saved:

"5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5)

Conclusion

I think the coming of the New Year is a great time for us examine ourselves; to take a hard look at our lives and see if they line up with God's will for us.

While we are living here on this earth, God is transforming us into the image of Christ:

"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." (Romans 12:1-2)

"29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)

Let's examine our lives at the end of 2023; let's do a yearly review.

Was your life more conformed to the image of Christ this year?

Did your life impact in a positive way the people that surround you? Were you a good ambassador?

Are there some areas that need improvement?

Are there some things in your life that need to be eliminated? Bad habits, etc.

Is there something that you know God wants you to do and you still have not done it?

It may be wise to separate your life into categories:

The Spiritual – what will you need to change or add in 2024 to become more spiritually minded. Bible reading, prayer, soul winning, church attendance, service.

The Physical – Those of us who are getting older especially need to consider this earthly body that we are living in. Without a healthy body, it is impossible to do all that God wants us to do. We are stewards over this body that God has given us. Maybe in 2024, God would want us to change our health habits. The healthier we are the more energy we will have to serve the Lord and enjoy life. Do you need to start exercising? Do you need to change your diet?

The Financial – God’s work requires finances. We cannot do what the Lord wants us to do as a church without the sacrificial gifts of God’s people. For you to be able to give, you need to prosper financially. Did you prosper financially in 2023? If you didn’t, you may need to change some of your financial habits. You may need to develop a budget. You may need to better yourself educationally or through technical training so that you can get a better job.

The Family – The family is the first institution God established; it came before the government or the church. What will you need to do in 2024 to help your family be all that God wants it to be.

My children are grown. My relationship with them has evolved from my being a benevolent dictator to now being a mentor and counselor. But I still want to play a big part in the lives of my family: my children, grandchildren, and even my extended family.

What can I do in 2024 to be a help and blessing to my family? How can I assist my family members to be all they can be for God and fulfil His will for their lives.

The examples that I mentioned are just the ones that popped into my mind as I was preparing this message. There is no doubt many more areas that I could have mentioned. The point is that you need to examine your life from 2023 and see what you can do to make it better in 2024.

Pray that God will give you wisdom and guide you as you consider what you should do.