

Will You Be the One?

Philippians 3:13-14

Sermon preached from the pulpit of Boca Raton Community Church on Sunday, January 7, 2001, by Dr. David H. McKinley, Senior Pastor.

As we turn the page to a new year, I do not know what kind of resolutions you may have set for yourself. I do know there is at least one new change that all of us have to make. When we write something and date it, we have to put "01." But there may be other habits that you are hoping to establish and develop in the course of this year. There may be new goals you have set for yourself and your family. Clearly, every one of us will have to make adjustments that will either serve to advance and enhance our lives in the years to come, or else we will be plagued by the bad habits that have restrained us in the past.

I want to be very open and forthright with you today. I have a very specific goal in this message this morning. It is a goal that is ultimately intended to impact our lives toward spiritual growth and maturity in the year to come. As I have been praying over recent months about where God would have me lead us in these days together, I have had a deep sense of His direction to this specific passage in Philippians; and then from this passage into a new series in the new year. I am trusting God is going to use this message to help all of us in a journey of faith.

I wish I could sit down with each of you individually, have a cup of coffee, and talk about where you are today, where I am, and where we are going in the days to come. Obviously, you recognize that if I met with each of you individually, it would be the end of the year before I laid out the challenge I want to communicate today. In fact, I have learned that pastors can get into trouble in visits that they make.

A pastor went to visit some people who had attended the church. As he approached the doorstep of the house, he saw someone or something moving just inside. He knocked on the door, noticed a jolt of the curtain next to him, but no one answered the door. He waited another minute and rang the doorbell. Still no one answered. He knocked a third time. He sensed that someone was there watching, but no one responded. Finally, this pastor took one of his business cards and wrote on the back of it: *Revelation 3:20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in."* He slid the card under the door. No response. He walked away from the house trying to figure out what happened. The next Sunday after the offering had been taken, one of the ushers came to the pastor and said, "Pastor, I thought I should let you know that someone dropped this card, your card, in the offering plate today. The pastor picked up the card, turned it over, and on the back by where he had written Revelation 3:20, there was simply a reference: *Genesis 3:10, "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself."* Even though pastoral visits are a good thing, they can get you in trouble!

It is my desire today that God will take what I share with you and will make this message personable. One of the greatest joys I have had through the years of preaching God's

Word is when someone says to me, "Pastor, I don't know about anybody else in this congregation, but I want you to know what you said this morning was just for me. Did somebody tell you what happened in my life this week?" And so many times I have said, "No, I didn't have a clue. I just simply tried to seek God to get His Word and to bring it here." Thank God, many times people have said, "Pastor, the message was just for me!"

My prayer and my goal is that there will be a clear sense that God has spoken to you today through this message. As we open God's Word, I want to ask you to simply pray from your heart, "God, what do You have to say to me today? God, what goals do You have for me this year in my life? God is there a goal?"

God Has Plans for His People

Scripture tells us not to worry about tomorrow, but the Bible does not tell us that we are never to think about tomorrow. As I read the Word of God, I am convinced that God has plans for you and me. One of my favorite passages of Scripture to read at the beginning of each new year is Jeremiah 29:11:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

God doesn't want us to be *victims* of this New Year. God wants us to begin this year as *victors* in the Lord Jesus Christ! Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! God's plan for you and me is that, in the course of this year, we would lay hold of the future and hope of what He has for us.

God Searches the Heart of His People

The Bible tells us in II Chronicles 16:9:

"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."

God is looking at us to see whose heart is loyal to Him. God has plans for His people! The plans that He has are those that would give us a future and a hope. Yet, God is searching the hearts of His people to say, "Whose heart is loyal to Me?" God is looking for people who want to connect with His plan and His purpose for their lives, and people who will live their lives to the glory of God in the year 2001. This is the truth of the Word of God, relevant, alive, and real for you and me *today*. God wants to do something in our lives!

Dwight L. Moody, an evangelist who lived a hundred years ago, said, "The world has yet to see what God will do through one man whose heart is fully His. By God's grace, I aim to be that man." A hundred years later, the life and ministry of Moody continues through the lives of many who came to know Christ because of him and the teaching, preaching, and publishing ministry under the banner of Moody Ministries.

In our local area, there is a 24-hour Christian radio broadcast at 89.3 FM. This ministry is a reflection of the outreach, life, and vision of D.L. Moody who lived long before there was ever the opportunity to use radio stations for Christian outreach. But you see, D.L. Moody was committed to being that man, in that hour, in that generation!

God is looking for people today who say, "Lord, my heart, my life is loyal to You." What about you? Will you be one whose heart is loyal to Christ in the year 2001? Do you have any goals for growth in your spiritual life? Are there any things you would like to accomplish or achieve in your spiritual life this year?

Have you fallen prey to where so many Christians are today? Are you coasting on your way to heaven? Are you riding, as though it were, downhill, knowing that you have eternal assurance of heaven and the things to come, but just skating and coasting through this life?

The Bible teaches us that God expects and demands more of us! I want to spend a few moments together looking at a passage of Scripture that echoes the heart of a man who, more than anything else, wanted to be true and loyal to Christ. He is one who said (*paraphrased*), "Lord, I want to be one. I want to be one that You can call on, one that You can use for Your honor and Your glory, one who will make a difference in my day for Christ. I won't be satisfied with anything less."

Analyze Your Current Spiritual Condition

We find his testimony in Philippians 3. The Apostle Paul was a man who had many goals, accomplishments, and achievements in his life. But on occasion, Paul took time to assess where he was, what needed to happen, and how he could move forward and advance in his walk with Christ. Paul said (*paraphrased*), "I am going to be one who is going to make a difference for Christ!"

Let's see what God says to us as we observe Paul's testimony in Philippians 3. Paul has been rehearsing in the opening verses all the things he has done, all the attributes, all the accomplishments, all the titles, all the successes of his life. But when he looked at his life, this is what he said in Philippians 3:7:

"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ."

Paul said that all of those things he had been putting in the column of assets in his life, he suddenly shifted over to the column of loss for the sake of Christ.

Philippians 3:8-11:

"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own

righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

The little phrase, *I have counted*, was a phrase used in the accounting world in Paul’s day. It was something right out of the marketplace where a business person would look at their profits and their losses.

Over the last few days, every newspaper in America has written about profit and loss in the stock market, in mutual funds, in the retail sector. The business world has taken account of their gains and losses.

But Paul said (*paraphrased*), “I sat down and took a look at my life. When I assessed my life, I understood that some of the things I had been counting as gains I moved over to the loss column of life. One thing in my life became important: I am not happy with self-righteousness. I want a life that is true to God!”

In the same way, you have to take inventory. Draw a circle around your life and analyze your current spiritual condition. Where are you today? If you are going to live a life that is true to God and grow in your relationship with Him, you have to begin by getting honest with God. You have to recognize that there are some things that you have given your life to, your energies to, your resources to that ultimately are issues of loss rather than gain in your life.

The Apostle Paul didn’t want to keep living and investing in the losses. He wanted to give himself to the gains!

I want the graph of my life to show an increase in a commitment toward godliness and a decrease in any form of self-righteousness, religion, or piety that separates myself from Jesus Christ. I want to be true to God!

Where are you today? Where does this message find you? Are you on a search to know Christ and to see if He is real and true? Are you investigating the Bible for the first time to see whether or not there are any answers to the daily issues of your life? Are you someone who has had opportunity to learn and to study the Bible, but in reality, you simply read it as though it were a catalog of information? Are power, energy, and vitality missing in your life spiritually? Are you lethargic spiritually? What is the current condition of your heart and life?

After Paul assessed his life, he made a commitment to go forward in Christ!

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. 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, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Paul said (*paraphrased*), "Whatever has been wasted investment, I am putting it away because I am starting in a new direction with Christ."

In many ways, this was New Year's Day for the Apostle Paul! Even though we have already celebrated New Year's Eve and New Years Day, I want to ask you: What is going to be new about this year in your life? What is going to be new this year in your faith? If you analyze your current condition, the wonderful blessing is that it can be a new year and a new day! Once we come to the place where we put away the "rubbish" of the past, God can do new and fresh things in our lives. We live knowing Christ and pressing toward His goal.

There was a fascinating story that came out of the Olympics this past summer in Sydney, Australia. Apparently, the coach of the girls' soccer team worked diligently with the team to help them cope with the difficulties and challenges of losses prior to the Olympics. Once there, this coach did something rather unusual. She gave every member of the girls' soccer team one of the most unique, one of the most talked about, and one of the most unappealing pieces of jewelry. She gave them a little toilet charm on a gold chain. When asked about why they would wear a golden toilet around their neck, they said, "The coaches taught us that whenever we make a mistake, whenever we have a loss, we should flush it and go on."

I know that may be a bit graphic, but that is what Paul is saying in Philippians 3:8, "... and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." Paul literally says (*paraphrased*), "I flush the things away that were gain to me."

The year 2000 is gone. Flush it! The year 1990 is gone! Flush it! The past is gone! Start today. Analyze your condition. Quit being a victim. With Paul, say (*paraphrased*), "The things that were gain to me I count loss for the sake of Christ in order that I may know Him, that I may experience Him, that I might be true to Him in my life!"

Personalize the Challenge to Grow

Paul began to personalize what he wanted to do. That is what I am asking you to do today, to say with Paul (*paraphrased*), "Whatever things were gained to me, I count as loss and not that I have already attained or am already perfect, but I press toward the mark of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Teenager, it's not enough to have a parent who presses toward that mark. Adults, it's not enough to have a pastor or a Bible study teacher who presses toward that mark. The call is for each one of us individually to say, "... what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ... *I press* toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

The challenge I am bringing to your heart today is for you and me to say, "I am going to press on. I am going to establish new goals. I haven't gotten to where I need to be, but I am going to move. I am going to go. I am going to press forward in my relationship to Christ in the year 2001!" When I add the "1" to my calendar, my checkbook, and dated correspondence, I am going to ask myself, "What is the one thing that I am living for?" Set specific goals to advance your life spiritually toward Jesus Christ!

Paul outlined and personalized his goal: to forget what is behind and to keep reaching for what is ahead, not living in yesterdays, but constantly looking at God's plan for tomorrow. Yesterday is a "cancelled check," tomorrow may be a promissory note, but *today* I am living for Christ. I am going to keep on that course until my tomorrows are living a life that is pleasing to God.

Goals are important. We must all have goals. Goals help us **establish priorities**. When I know what my goal is, then I know the steps I have to take to get there. For example, if my goal today is to get home, then it helps me to establish the priority streets that I need to take to get there. I am not going to go east if my house is west. Goals help us differentiate between what is urgent and important in life.

Goals are important to **measure progress**. Activity in life is not accomplishment. We can be very busy in the year 2001 and essentially accomplish nothing. I will accomplish something when I have goals and when I allow those goals to help me see how am I doing. Am I progressing? If you have a goal to lose ten pounds, there is only one way to get there. You have to measure the progress. There are two ways of doing that: stepping on a scale and measuring how your clothes fit. If your clothes are getting tighter, you are not getting to your goal.

Goals are important to **develop discipline**. No one likes the word *discipline*, but everyone knows the outcome. No discipline, no development!

Goals are important to **challenge faith**. It wasn't that the Apostle Paul was going to grit his teeth and try harder. It wasn't up to Paul to become a more mature and better Christian. Only Christ could do that in him. Paul was going to believe God that he would lay hold for which God had laid hold of him. The challenge of faith is to become what God intends for you and me to become, not because we can *will* ourselves to do it, but because we believe God to do it in us. We have to keep letting go of the present that we might keep embracing a future of becoming what God wants us to become.

Goals are important because they **inspire others**. When I lift the standard in my own life, it challenges others to lift the bar in theirs. One of the greatest things that each of us can do is to set new goals in our lives to grow spiritually so that as others around us see us growing, they are challenged, encouraged, and inspired. We see athletes on television often say, "That encourages me to see someone so disciplined and focused. I need to be more disciplined!" Likewise, it happens spiritually in a church. People grow through watching one another! Paul was a great example of this. His life and faith were an

incredible inspiration to others. Paul was clearly saying (paraphrased), "I am going to live. I am going to press on. I am going to run. I am going to *be* what God wants me to be!" Look at the outcome in Philippians 3:15:

Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

Paul was saying (*paraphrased*), "I am going to do it so it will challenge you. I am going to see if I can rally a team of others who will be inspired with me to say one thing: I am going to be what God wants me to be!"

It's great to talk about goals. It's great to encourage goals in the general sense. But I want you to know my intention is to go *beyond*. There are at least four specific areas where I am challenging you today to personalize the truth of this message towards growth in your life and faith. There are four areas in which I want to say to you, "Will you be the one? Will you be the one God has called you to be in the year 2001 to make a difference for Christ?"

Here is the challenge I want to put before you:

1. Claim one promise in Scripture that will guide, direct and develop your life and faith this year. Get alone with God and say, "God, I need You to speak to me through your Word. I want your Word to become real in me. Throughout the course of the year 2001, I want to lay hold of one thing that I am going to believe You to do in my life, one thing that I am going to believe You to fulfill according to Your promise, one thing that I am going to embrace. I am going to ask You to do one thing, fulfill one promise, using one passage."

Year after year, there have been times when I have sought to ask God to speak to me and to become real to me through his Word. Now I am not talking about the "lucky deal" method where you flip through the Bible and claim the first promise your finger randomly lands on. You don't want to be like the guy who put his finger on a promise that said, "Judas went out and hanged himself." The guy didn't like that verse, so he flipped a few more pages and put his finger down and it said, "Go and do likewise." He still didn't like that choice, continued flipping, and put his finger down to the verse, "Whatever you do, do quickly." No, you don't want the "lucky deal" method. Get alone with God and ask Him to teach you how to believe Him in one area of your life. Ask God to teach you through a promise in His Word.

2. Find one place where you can identify yourself in service and in prayer. This may involve serving the Lord in a new area of ministry somewhere around the world, a country that would become a place of the heart for you. If you are not able to go to that place physically, you could embrace one place and commit to pray daily for the people there and ask God to use you to become aware of the needs that are there. Begin praying today, asking God to identify one place for you in which you can invest time and prayer.

3. Start where you are today and add one percent to whatever else you are giving.

There is a clear standard in Scripture that was set forth before the law of Moses, affirmed in the law of Moses, and again affirmed by our Savior, Jesus Christ. The tithe is the minimum standard of giving and stewardship for every believer. A tithe is a tenth. I believe tithing is a biblical principle to challenge our giving and understanding of God's ownership.

However, I recognize there are many people who are struggling with debt. There are those who are struggling to begin a standard of obedience in their lives. I am asking you to begin where you are. If you give nothing, then begin to give one percent in the first quarter of this year. Allow God to teach you to trust Him with one percent. If you are giving five percent, ask God to help you give six percent. If you are giving ten percent, ask God to help you give eleven percent. Trust God's involvement in the financial condition of your life. Trust Him to help you give one percent over where you are giving today and prove His faithfulness in your life. Trust the Lord! When you begin to prove Him, to involve Him in your life financially, you will be amazed to see how real the truth of Scripture is about God meeting the needs of our lives.

4. Commit to reach one person for Christ and involve them in the life and ministry of this church. One person! I don't know who that one person may be for you, but I am asking you to pray that God will lead you to one person who you can invite, connect, and bring into the life and ministry of this church. We have recently adopted a new mission statement: The mission of Boca Raton Community Church is to build a community of believers committed to Jesus Christ, connected to one another, and challenged to share the Gospel. We didn't develop a new mission statement just to make a statement. We did it to make an impact! The impact that we are longing to see is for God to accomplish in and through our lives something that *only* He can do as each one of us becomes committed to reaching one person for Christ.

One is the challenge: one promise, one place, one percent, one person. God, use me as *one* to make a difference!

I am one.

I am only one.

I cannot do everything but I can do something.

What I can do I ought to do.

And what I ought to do I will by the grace of God do!

Will you be the *one*? Are you willing to believe God for one new promise, one new place of service? Are you willing to start where you are and add one percent? Will you ask God to help you reach one person? Will you say, I am going to be *one*, not by my strength, not by my power, but by the grace of God? Will you be *one* who will make a difference in 2001?

Father, You see within the heart. Lord, I believe as we personalize this message today, we forget those things that are behind and press to those things that are ahead, toward

the mark of the upward call of God in Christ. Father, let this heart and let this attitude of maturity be found in us that we would challenge one another to love in faith and good deeds. Father, make us more Christ-like and that as a church we would say, "Lord, we don't want to be just another church, but we want to be the church that will be the one for You in this community. We pray that You would bless other churches with the same heartbeat, the same life, the same faith. I thank You for these who have stood by faith. And Lord, we know that the strength of fulfillment of each of these things is not in ourselves. It is in You. So we commit ourselves to be what You have called us to be as Your people: holy, pure, complete, faithful. Lord, would You find in those who are standing a heart that is loyal to You today? Father, may You be pleased and bless us with Your strength and Your power.

You may be one who needs to call upon the name of the Lord, today. Do you need to follow Christ? Do you need to know Christ? There may never have been a moment in your life when you saw the loss of things in life without Christ and the gain there is in knowing Christ. Today, confess Christ! Trust in Him! Right now in your heart, pray this prayer:

*Dear Lord Jesus,
I know that I am a sinner in a condition of need for a Savior. Jesus, You came that I might have life everlasting. Jesus, today I put my faith and my trust in You. I believe on Your name. You are the Son of God! Today, I take You at Your word that if I receive You, I will become a child of God. I'll experience life abundantly! So Jesus, I trust You. Amen.*

If you prayed that prayer today, let us help you continue to grow in your faith. We have ministers on our church staff that can answer any questions you may have. We have a Bible we can give you and resources to help and encourage you in your decision to follow Christ. Please contact us, either through correspondence or by telephone:

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