

3 GOALS FOR 2018

What is your main goal for 2018? As the New Year dawns, most people are talking about their goals and resolutions. This is also the time of year that our church usually picks a key verse to focus on for the year.

There are a lot of worthy goals we could pursue. For many people, including myself, certainly a healthier lifestyle is always important. For believers there are always commitments regarding Bible reading and prayer that we consider at the beginning of the New Year. These are all worthy goals. But I want to focus this morning for a brief time on one particular passage that gives insight into the goal orientation of the Apostle Paul.

He is in prison in Rome under the guard of Roman soldiers and writing to a group of believers in Philippi to thank them for their financial support and to encourage their fellowship in the gospel. He knows that they could be unsettled due to a number of factors:

- The persecution that has led to his imprisonment
- The attacks against his apostleship and ministry from many quarters
- The selfish ambition of those preaching the true gospel message but from bad motives – wanting to advance their ministry role and status over that of the Apostle Paul

But listen to what the Apostle Paul says in **Philippians 1:12** –

GOD USES OUR CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES TO ADVANCE HIS GOSPEL = THE PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST

Paul had learned the key lesson that life wasn't all about him; about his comforts; about his circumstances;

For him *to live was Christ*. Life was all about the advancement of the gospel; about the proclamation of Jesus Christ; about the growth of God's Kingdom.

So today I just want us to consider **3 Goals for 2018** from Paul's perspective in **vs. 12**

I. CHURCH CONNECTIVITY — GOAL OF ENCOURAGING THE BRETHERN IN THE CONTEXT OF CHURCH COMMUNITY

“Now I want you to know, brethren,”

Look at the connectivity that Paul had with the church in Philippi; He viewed them as partners with himself in the gospel ministry. He was driven by a burden to keep them up to date on his situation and make sure they were in good communication.

2 Key points here:

A. Christians Cannot Function in Isolation – We Need Church Community

None of us – even the Apostle Paul – are strong enough to serve the Lord in isolation; we need the community of believers; his most lonely and vulnerable times were when he felt he was all alone without the support of the Christian community

Look at what Paul has to say in this chapter about the fellowship in the gospel he enjoyed with the church at Philippi (1:5)

Just like God does not want us to abandon the other social structures which he has established for our good – the family, civil government, our responsibilities in the workplace, etc.

B. All Christians Need Encouragement Continually

That is not a negative – that is how Jesus Christ, the Head of His Universal Church, has designed us to function

2 Cor. 1:3-12

That is why we are commanded not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together in the local church context;

But it is not enough to just meet with other believers:

we must interact at a fellowship level – that has been challenging for us

we must support one another –

6:2 – *“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ”*

- those burdens could be sin issues
- those burdens could be health challenges
- those burdens could be financial and material needs

Gal. 6:10 same context – *“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith”*

We must be transparent and share our needs so others can help us – we need others to know about our challenging circumstances and we need to be invested in the lives of our brethren – that requires openness in sharing our needs, our prayer concerns, our praises;

We must actively use our spiritual gifts for the building up of the body

1 Cor. 12 – picture of the church as the body of Christ all functioning together with each part making its vital contribution – need to study that entire chapter –

“Now you are Christ’s body and individually members of it.”

II. MATURE MINDSET — GOAL OF AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

“that my circumstances”

A. Sometimes Our Circumstances Can Be Especially Challenging

Look at what the Apostle Paul was facing: (we mentioned this earlier) in prison at Rome – A.D. 60-62 – guarded by soldiers – **1:7, 13**

selfish and ambitious preachers were seeking to undermine Paul’s ministry and apostolic credentials **1:17**

Look at the difficult circumstances other face and their remarkable testimony of how God has used their trials to advance His gospel

Joni Eareckson Tada

Back in the '70s, my Bible study friend Steve Estes shared ten little words that set the course for my life: “God permits what he hates to accomplish what he loves.” Steve explained it this way: “Joni, God allows all sorts of things he doesn’t approve of. God hated the torture, injustice, and treason that led to the crucifixion. Yet he permitted it so that the world’s worst murder could become the world’s only salvation. In the same way, God hates spinal cord injury, yet he permitted it for the sake of Christ in you—as well as in others. Like Joseph when he told his brothers, ‘God intended [my suffering] for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives’” (Gen. 50:20).

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/reflections-on-50th-anniversary-of-my-diving-accident/>

Allan Tibbels and ministry at New Song Community Church in Sandtown in inner city Balt—went home to be with the Lord in 2010;

Allan focused on improving housing in the community. His influence on the neighborhood was so great that The New York Times profiled Allan in their 2010 year-end issue of “The Lives They Lived.” Times writer Jason De Parle wrote this beautiful and wonderful remembrance of Allan and observed, “There are programs that have built more dwellings, but few have built closer bonds.”

<https://eerdword.com/2011/06/03/to-live-in-peace-a-tribute-to-allan-tibbels-by-mark-gornik/>

But we are going to face challenging personal circumstances; how will we respond?

B. Have a Long Term, Eternal, Kingdom-Oriented Perspective

James 1:2-11 “*Count it joy when we encounter trials*” – How can we do this? Why should we do this?

1 Peter 5:10-11 “*After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion, forever and ever. Amen.*”

Romans 8:18 *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*

Our present circumstances are often associated with suffering and trials and challenging personal circumstances. But our future glory is truly glorious and assured.

Circumstances come and go ... but the Great Shepherd of His sheep is always with us to guide, comfort, and sustain as He builds His church against all opposition and obstacles

Finally

III. GOSPEL GROWTH — GOAL OF BEING USED BY GOD TO ADVANCE HIS KINGDOM

“have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel”

A. Seek First His Kingdom – Matt. 6:33

“Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”

Evaluate your priorities for 2018 --

Let's not live like the world lives; let's not be anxious or fearful or insecure like the world is

Let's be aggressive in promoting the gospel – in proclaiming the good news about Jesus Christ

Paul wrote to the Philippians because he wanted them to continue to be bold and courageous in their gospel proclamation.

B. Desire to See the Progress of the Gospel

At the end of the day it is all about being involved in the worldwide goal of carrying out the Great Commission – **Matt 28:18-20**

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

It is all about making disciples – *“Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men”*

- evangelism leading to baptism and church growth
- teaching and nurturing leading to maturity and reproduction