

“2020 Vision for the New Year” – Pt. 4

(1/19/20)

We are currently working our way thru the Gospel of John here at Calvary on Sunday mornings—however, we have put that on hold to do a series we’ve entitled, “*2020 Vision for the New Year*”.

Every New Year brings with it new hope—hope that in this new year God will make things in our lives new in the sense of new opportunities, new strength for victory over old sins, a new relationship perhaps (if you’re single)—in short the hope that this new year will be a better year than last year.

And if that is your hope for *this* new year, you will be happy to know that—you are on solid biblical ground!

I say that because we serve a God who is *constantly* wanting to do new things in the lives of His people.

This was something God promised His people Israel when the nation was in captivity in Babylon because of their sins—one of the darkest periods in their history.

It doesn’t take much for us to imagine how the people must have felt—abandoned, forsaken by God while the future looked bleak and hopeless.

And yet in the midst of this darkness and depression—God broke thru with a message of hope:

Isaiah 43:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. ¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new

thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness *and* rivers in the desert.

I believe this passage captures the heart of God for His people throughout the year—but especially as we enter the New Year!

That there is hope, no matter how dark and hopeless things look because—God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us because of our sins and failures.

In fact—He is wanting to do a new thing in all of our lives!

You say, “*How do you know that? How can you be sure that this passage expresses His heart and desire for my life personally?*”

I know it because—God always wants to do new things in the lives of His people!

We saw this principle at work when we got saved—

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

So, when God saved us, He did a new thing in our lives by making us a *spiritual* ‘new creation’.

And someday we will see this principle applied to the whole universe—

Revelation 21:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new”...

Revelation 21:1 (NKJV)

¹ Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...

Now when it comes to our spiritual lives (that part of us that deals with our relationship with God)—He always wants to do new things because it keeps our relationship with Him fresh and vibrant.

You see, God hates complacency and stagnation in our spiritual lives because—He knows, if we're not constantly moving forward, we will inevitably start sliding backward.

And so, you can be sure that in this New Year God wants to do something new in your walk with Him!

However, as we have been saying in this series, change only becomes a reality—when *we* get serious about it and set our sight firmly upon it.

To do that we must see this year (and every year after it) thru the lens of God's Word.

It's only when we view the new year (and life itself) thru the lens of God's Word that our lives come into focus and make sense—which then allows us to “*take aim at change!*”

But the Bible is a *big* Book, and we need to start somewhere—and so we said the best place to start viewing life thru the lens of God's Word is thru the greatest commandment in the Word of God.

We know it's the greatest because the Lord Jesus Christ, told us it was, that we—

“...Love the LORD our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. This is the greatest commandment.” (Mark 12:30)

This then becomes the ‘lens’ that we must view our lives thru—the number one pursuit of this new year, which by God’s grace and strength will bring about the change we are hoping for!

I. To Love God with All Your Heart

The **heart** is the seat of the *will*—and therefore, to love God with all your heart means that you have to *purpose* (“will”) certain things in your heart—

- A. Purpose in your heart to live a life of obedience and commitment to God
- B. Purpose in your heart to control what comes out of your mouth
- C. Purpose in your heart to honor God with your finances
- D. Purpose in your heart to bring God into every (substantive) decision

II. To Love God with All Your Soul

The **soul** is the seat of our *emotions* so when we talk about loving God with all our *soul*—we’re talking about having a *passion* for God. And not just *loving* Jesus but being ‘in love’ with Jesus. (Explain)

III. To Love God with All Your Mind

The **mind** is the seat of *reason*.

When God said in Isaiah 1:18, “*Come let us reason together...*”—He was appealing to the *mind*.

As we have said in previous studies, the mind is ‘ground zero’ for spiritual warfare—the main battlefield in our war with the devil where most spiritual warfare is fought.

Spiritual warfare is primarily a battle for control of our thinking, because Satan knows if he can control the way we think, he can control the way we live!—“*As a man thinks in his heart [mind], so is he*” (Prov.23:7)

And that’s why God, in His Word, commands His children—“*Above all else, guard what enters your mind, for everything you do flows from it.*” (Proverbs 4:23)

IV. To Love God with all Your Strength

Of course, "**strength**" is referring to *physical* strength—or as one author put it, "*the physical energy and function of one's bodily powers.*"

The first three injunctions are *internal* qualities (heart, soul and mind) and the fourth is the *outward* action that results or flows from those *inward* qualities of love for God.

It's important that we put into action all the love that we have for God *inwardly*—otherwise our love for God is never expressed *outwardly*—our light never shines and the world around us is never exposed to God's love flowing from the lives of His people!

God's love (agape) is sacrificial love that He wants us to demonstrate to others—

1 John 3:16-18 (NLT2)

¹⁶ We know what real love is [God's agape love] because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

Loving others (serving and sacrificing for them)—especially other Christians is one of the chief ways we love God with our strength (our physical lives) in this world.

Jesus said, "*Whatever you do for the least of these, My brethren, you do for Me.*" (Matt. 25:40)

Sacrificial service then becomes the *outward* expression of our love for God.

The New Testament in general has a lot to say about Christians being servants—in fact we have been saved to serve:

Titus 2:14 (NLT2)

¹⁴ He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds [works, acts of kindness...].

Galatians 6:9 (NLT2)

⁹ So let's not get tired of doing what is good [the context is serving God]. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

Romans 12:11 (NLT2)

¹¹ Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.

Now, let me say that the amount of love you have for God in your heart, will be directly proportionate to how faithfully and fervently you serve Him *outwardly* through the actions of your life.

The inward qualities of the heart, soul and mind—are what drive the outward activities of our lives.

If you only love God inwardly but never translate it into service and practical living it's meaningless because—our love for God inwardly only finds meaning if it is demonstrated by loving others outwardly!

And in fact, John tells us that loving others outwardly is a test of whether or not we really love God inwardly—“...*for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?*” (1John 4:20)

Someone has said that, “*A Christian is a mind through which Christ thinks; a heart through which Christ loves; a voice through which Christ speaks; a hand through which Christ helps.*”

Or as another writer stated more fully—

*“Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work today.
He has no feet but our feet to lead men in the way.
He has no tongue but our tongue to tell men how He died
He has no help but our help to bring them to His side.*

*We are the only Bible the careless world will read,
We are the sinner's gospel; we are the scoffer's creed;
We are the Lord's last message, given in word and deed;
What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?
What if our hands are busy with other work than His?
What if our feet are walking where sin's allurements is?
What if our tongue is speaking of things His lips would spurn?
How can we hope to help Him or welcome His return?"*

Some of you are no doubt thinking—*"I intend to start serving God in ministry someday, it's just that now isn't the right time."*

There will never be an ideal time to start serving the Lord.

If you're going to make this year count by accomplishing your goals, then—start now—don't wait!

Ecclesiastes 11:4 (NKJV)

⁴ He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.

In other words—If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done!

"There is only one life it will soon be past and only what is done for Christ will last."

And yet according to a survey I saw a while back—the average American spends 2.65 hours a day or 18 ½ hours a week watching T.V. and only 11 min a day or 1 hour and 17 min. per week in religious activities.

Divisions of time in our lives have thus been sketched by Dr. C. C. Albertson:

"It might be wise for us to take a little inventory of our resources as to time and review our habits of using it.

There are 168 hours in each week. Fifty-six of these we spend in sleep.

Of the remaining 112 hours, we devote 48 to labor. This leaves sixty-four hours, of which let us assign twelve hours for our daily meals. (This allows thirty minutes for each meal, and one-and- one-half hours extra to promote good digestion)

We have left fifty-two hours, net, of conscious active life to devote to any purpose to which we are inclined—is it too much to say that God requires a tithe of this free time? One tenth of fifty-two hours is 5.2 hours? This would require you to come to 2 services a week and spend about 20 minutes a day in prayer and Bible reading.”

Is this too much to ask those who want to love God this year with all your heart, soul, mind and strength?!

At this point, many Christians would no doubt say, “*After I finish all that I have going on—I have no energy left to serve God with...*”

And that is true for most people—who try to serve the Lord in their own strength!

When Jesus told us to “**love God will all our strength**”—He had our physical body in view, that’s true—but our physical body as *empowered* with the strength of the Holy Spirit!

The Spirit’s strength becomes our strength—when we submit our life to Him as an instrument to be used for His glory.

The strength for serving God comes from the Holy Spirit—the strength to serve ourselves, comes from us.

When we’re really doing His work, His way—He will supply the power and strength we need to do that work.

If we are weary and worn out, it’s usually because we are trying to serve the Lord in our strength (often for our own glory) and not in His strength.

John Wesley is a good illustration of this—one biographer had this to say about him:

“John Wesley was a dynamo. He preached in Saint Mary’s in Oxford. He preached in the churches. He preached in the mines. He preached in the fields and on the streets. He preached on horseback. He even preached on his father’s tombstone. John Wesley didn’t tire! John Wesley preached 42,000 sermons. He averaged 4,500 miles a year. He rode sixty to seventy miles a day and preached three sermons a day on an average. When he was eighty-three, he wrote in his diary, ‘I am a wonder to myself, I am never tired, either with preaching, writing, or travelling!’”

What was the secret to Wesley’s strength? —he relied on God’s power to do God’s work!

Ephesians 6:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of *His might*.

Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)

¹³ I can do all things through *Christ* who strengthens me.

Do you realize that even back in the Old Testament, the Lord tried to communicate this principle to His servants the priests?

And He did that by commanding that everything the priests wore was to be made of *linen*—God forbid them from wearing anything made from wool when they served Him.

Why? Because He didn’t want them to perspire in their service for Him.

You see, God wanted to communicate to His priests that their service to Him wasn’t to be a burden or laborious or rigorous—but joyful and done in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

Sweat or perspiration symbolically represented service done in the flesh and not in the Spirit.

Contrast that with all of the perspiration going into the work of God today—so much of it being done in the energy of the flesh and not in the power of the Spirit.

A.W. Tozer—*“If we removed the Holy Spirit from the work of the early church 90% of what they were doing would have come to a stop. If we removed the Holy Spirit from the work of the church today 10% of what is being done would come to a stop.”*

How do we **“love God with all our strength”**—by serving Him in the Spirit.

“How do I do that?”

By first of all realizing that—**serving God is a supernatural endeavor so don’t attempt it in your own strength, the power comes from the Holy Spirit.**

Zechariah 4:6 (NKJV)

⁶ So he answered and said to me: "This *is* the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the Lord of hosts.

Luke 24:49 (NKJV)

⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

When we try to do God’s work in our own strength—**we’ll know it because we will become weary and frustrated and want to quit.**

Isaiah 40:30-31 (NKJV)

³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, ³¹ But those who wait on the LORD [who expect, look for, and hope in Him] shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

I believe that this is the greatest need in the Church today and the single greatest reason why we are losing the culture war to the devil in America when Jesus clearly promised us that against His Church the gates of hell would not prevail.

It's because we are trying to do the work of God in our own strength and not in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The result is a lot of activity, a lot of weariness and exhaustion—with very little lasting fruit to show for it.

We have substituted programs for the power of God and degrees (theological) for the dynamic of the Holy Spirit.

Hudson Taylor (after he was baptized in the Holy Spirit) said, *“Without the power (baptism) of the Holy Spirit even the easiest things seem hard—but with the power of the Holy Spirit even the hardest things seem easy.”*

→ Give D. L. Moody's testimony on the baptism with the Holy Spirit

And so that ends our little series, **“2020 Vision for the New Year.”**

Yes, change in this new year won't become a reality until *we* get serious about it and set our sight firmly upon it.

Then we need to do our part in taking responsibility to bring about change (committing ourselves to be in church regularly, daily devotions, fellowship with the people of God faithfully by being in one of the small groups or attending midweek study.

But it won't happen without faith either (which is how God's strength is 'tapped' into—

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Remember again, what God said to His people Israel so many years ago—and I believe He is saying to His Church today—

Isaiah 43:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old.

¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness *And* rivers in the desert.

This is NOT about making New Year's resolutions where you try to use the flesh to defeat the flesh.

This is about having faith in God's strength to do the impossible in your life.

Make that your prayer and hope for this year!