

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Message: What Will be Different
New Years 2012
Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 01.01.12

Happy New Year Crossroads. Go ahead and have a seat. While you're sitting down let's thank them one more time for leading us this morning. We're going to hear more of them here in just a little bit. We're going to do things a little bit differently this morning. We're going to do things in threes. We're going to have three teaching segments. We're going to have three worship segments and there's three things that I want you to learn this morning to start the new year. Whenever you turn over a page of the calendar it's somewhat cathartic isn't it? It feels like something brand new is starting. You get a fresh start. You get new goals. There's resolutions but before we can move forward we have to take care what has happened in the past and what do we do about that? What do we do about the past? Well, the scriptures give us, actually very clear indication about anything good or bad that's happened in the past. We actually are called to forget it. If you're not familiar with that concept it actually comes out of the book of Philippians. Paul is writing and he says one thing I do. So he's laser focused with his concept. And he says here in Philippians, one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead I press on to the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way. One thing I do.

Now Paul is not saying we are to ignore the past. He's not saying we should disregard the past. He's saying that the past no longer defines you and when we're crossing over from an old year into a new year that's an important reminder for us. It's a foundational reminder that would set the tone for the entire New Year ahead of us. Because many times what do we do? We carry the things that happened last year or the years previous with us into the New Year and it just kind of goes from year into the next. But if we practice what Paul is laying down here, if we forget what lies behind, even those things that are good. We say no longer are those going to be things that define or make up who I am because many times, even good things tend to have a defining moment that can turn negative as if something good happened in the past and now we can never reach that level again and that kind of haunts us. Good thing. But still- something in the past. What does Paul say? We need to forget that. But most often what is it that's in our path? It's things we want to forget; things that we've done that we're not proud of; that kind of hangs off into our minds. In fact, our memories won't let us forget it. But what does Paul do? One thing, he says. Paul is single minded. He's passionate. He's specific about what? About forgetting.

So, the first thing that I want you to learn this morning, I want you to write this down: what we do in 2012 is we forget 2011. We have to let that go. We have to get beyond that. Forget. We forget. Actually the word *epi-lanthánō* in the Greek means that you hide something so well that you're not able to find it. Have you ever done that? Have you ever hidden something so well that you're actually not able to find something? I actually did this when I was ten years old. I had this little box and it was a metal box and I put all kinds of precious things in it. I wrapped it in plastic and duct tape and I buried out in our back yard. And then I forgot where I buried it. Drove my mother crazy because all that summer I was putting holes in the back yard trying to find that box. I hid it so well. I remember I did it one year with Michelle's Christmas gift. I hid it somewhere and I couldn't find it. And finally I did. I found it. It was just in time. But have you ever done that? You see, that's the concept here is that we hide something so well that we forget it. You see, when Paul says that he forgets what is behind he's referring to a typed of forgetting that's not passive but's active and that's really the sense of obliteration. We obliterate it from our mind.

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And you know what? That's exactly what God does. If there's something in your past that your mind cannot forget you need to understand the mind of God. God says if you've brought it before Him and you've sought His forgiveness. You've repented of that then He separates that as far as the east is from the west. And do you ever notice that the east can never catch up with the west and the west can never catch up with the east? It's a euphemism. The idea is that it's as far separated as possible. God forgets about it. Scripture even talks about that He buries this in the deepest sea. And so what are we to do? We are to take that on ourselves. We are to obliterate it. That's the negative. We forget it. But look at the text. If you remember the text. Strain forward, press on. Those are two athletic terms. Strain forward. Press on to what? The goal. You press on towards the goal of what Paul? What goal did he have in mind? Listen. Here's the goal for Paul. The goal for Paul was to be like his Savior. Christ-likeness.

Now, what goes on normally at the change of a calendar? We have all kinds of new goals don't we? Some of us want to shed a few pounds. Some of us want to get in shape. I've had a gym membership for the past year and I think I've been there four times so I think it's cost me about a hundred bucks every time I go. So I've decided this year, you know what, I'm going to go. You know what? I'm kind of embarrassed about that. I'm kind of embarrassed because I know I'm going to walk in there in January and behind me are all kinds of other people who have made New Year's resolutions and we make it through the first couple weeks and then what happens? We fade out. That's kind of a typical resolution. Some of us have those resolutions - well, we're going to shed a few pounds, get in shape, we're going to quit a bad habit. Or some of you have a little better goals than mine. I'm going to go back to school. I'm going to get that degree. I'm going to get that job. This is going to be a good sales year for me. Whatever. We have these goals in mind. Can I suggest a goal for you as followers of Christ? Let me suggest that 2012 you follow the example of Paul and you press towards the goal of Christ-likeness. What can you do in 2012 that was different than 2011 to become more like your Savior? Think about that. We'll talk about it in a minute.

Father, this morning we come and we are celebrating the New Year in by worshipping you and we do praise your holy name. Our desire for this New Year is to have a goal of Christ-likeness. Teach us Lord how we might walk like you. In Jesus name. Amen.

(Break for Worship)

Becoming Christ-like is a big goal. It's a very big goal. So, what we need to do is we need to think about narrowing it. How do we do that? Well, what characteristic defined Jesus Christ? What characteristic set Jesus Christ apart from any other human being; from any other religious leader? If you'd ask me what defined Jesus Christ is the fact that He forgave. He forgave so quickly. He taught it. He demonstrated it. He lived it. Remember when He was on the cross, what did He say? Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. He taught His disciples to forgive. He taught us how to forgive. Do you realize that because of Christ we are completely forgiven; utterly forgiven? Past, present, future sins. Forgiven. You say, how can a future sin be forgiven? Well, remember all sins were future from the standpoint of the cross on, right? So, everything - your past, your present, right now. Your future all forgiven by Christ. That's the fulfillment of the cross.

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Paul writes in 2 Corinthians. Listen to these words. If anyone is in Christ he's a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. It sounds an awful lot like the passage in Philippians, right? We need to forget the past. We need to press forward. He says you are a new creation. So, the old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. Skip over verse 18 to verse 19. That is in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. You realize your trespasses; your sins are not counted against you as a follower of Jesus? In fact that word counted. An interesting word, *logizomai*. It's where we get the word logarithm. It's an accounting term. Literally God is not keeping a record. Do you ever think that about God? That God is that God behind the desk somewhere watching you and taking down notes and he's writing down everything that you're doing wrong? And He's going to keep that list and He's going to check that list twice? God is not Santa Claus. God does not have a list of what you've done wrong. I think we all need to say hallelujah. Amen to that. Thank you brother. Absolutely. Hallelujah - that's a great way to express what's going on. It's not counted against us. In Christ you're forgiven. Because of that what are we to do? We are to act like Jesus. So the second thing I want you to write down is forgive. We start the New Year out by forgetting and forgiving.

Who do you need to forgive? Now, I skipped over verse 18 of 2 Corinthians so let me go back to it. 2 Corinthians, 5:18. You're going to see it on the side screens. In the middle of what we just learned about God reconciling and not keeping account of our sins. Right in the middle of verse 18 says this, and this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. What is the ministry of reconciliation? You know what the ministry of reconciliation is? It's the ministry of forgiving others. So the thing you have to think about is this since our sins are not counted we do not count the sins of others. You got that? Do you remember the Lord's Prayer? Sure you do. It goes like this. Jesus says, pray then like this. Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread then, here it is – forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

But, do you remember what comes after the Lord's Prayer? See, the Lord's Prayers, we know that but do you remember what Jesus said right on the heels of teaching His disciples how to pray? He says this, verse 14. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

I think the roadblock for many of us to spiritual maturity and Christ-likeness is right here. Somebody has done something and we refuse to forgive them. Yet we run to the cross in our own sin seeking the forgiveness of the Savior. You see, what he's saying is it doesn't work that way. You have to be like Christ in this area. You have to be willing to forgive and many times we hold on. We clutch tightly the wrongs that have been done to us and we walk with open hands, forgive and let those things go. Why don't you start 2012 with open hands and say enough already. I'm not going to let this bitterness reign in my life anymore. I'm not going to let this unforgiveness, this sense of, it doesn't really matter what they've done because I can guarantee you nothing that they have done to you, as heinous as that act might have been does not compare to what we've done in offense to a holy God. And yet our holy God, Jesus Christ forgives us. Don't hold on anymore.

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What are you holding onto? I tell you what you're holding onto. You're holding onto the very thing that blocks you from becoming like Christ in this area. And here's the thing that if you just trust the Word of God, not me, if you just trust the Word of God just enough to say alright, I'm going to step across that forgiveness and line and I'm going to let it go, as hard as that might be I'm going to step across. I'm going to see what happens. You know what will happen? The burden will be lifted from you. The peace of Jesus Christ will begin to reign in your heart and you'll be able to grow past an area that has been stopping you and you might find that forgiveness becomes a quick trait in your life overall. Try this sometimes. Try just to practice walking through a day saying I'm going to forgive any offense no matter how large or how small. You know if the clerk at the store is mean to me or rude or somebody cuts me off in traffic or someone makes some action against me that I know is offensive and I want to retaliate just walk through your day and say I'm going to have a forgiving spirit. And see how that just doesn't change the tempo of life. Now, imagine this on the grand scale, that blockade in your life. You say, I'm going to let that go.

Who's in your mind right now? What action? What is it? You know what we do that? We take this and we push this towards the cross and we say God, I can't do this. I can't do this on my own. I can't do this on my own strength. I'm going to follow the Word. You do it through me? You want to do that? Now, we're not done but why don't you let me lead you in that prayer right now? So, let's just bow our heads and in your minds eye I want you to picture the cross and I want you to put that incident or that person or people and I want you to just put them, push them towards the cross and just in the quietness of your own soul say God, I give them to you. I give this to you. I forgive them. I'm going to let it go. Give me the strength not to take it back, to carry it. No more gossip. No more harsh words, bitter feelings. It's all gone. Push it towards the cross. Why? Because I want to become like You. That's my desire. I want to become like You.

(Break for Worship)

Alright, go ahead. Grab a seat. We've learned two things, right? Number one we're going to forget what happened in 2011. We're going to move forward by becoming like Christ in this area of forgiveness. This is manageable. This is what we can work on throughout 2012. Now, when we forgive we become more like Christ. We understand that. But we have to then not allow the moment to subside but what does Paul tell us? We have to move forward. We have to push on. We have strain towards the goal. So, we have forgotten, forgiven. Third, I want you to write this down. Forge ahead. We forge ahead towards this goal. This goal does not loose sight throughout 2012. Let me take you back to the passage that we're studying. He says one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead I press on towards the goal. Now, I already told you those two words. Straining forward I press on. Those are athletic terms.

Now let's think about this. He says I want to strain forward. This is literally the idea of stretching. We're going to stretch every muscle, every fiber. We're going to be single minded towards this goal of Christ-likeness in 2012. Think about an athlete straining to reach the finish line. Or a ski jumper straining to over his skis to get those last few inches of flight before he touches down.

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That became all too real for us this last week. A friend of ours from the church called us the Friday before Christmas and said we have a condo reserved in Lake Placid New York. We can't go. Would you like it? It was a wonderful gift for our family so Christmas day we packed up our car. The next morning we drove the twelve hours to Lake Placid, had a great time. Just kind of relaxing. One of the things that we did while we were there was we took the family around to some of the different Olympic sites there in Lake Placid and by far my favorite was the ski jumping complex. Do you remember that? It's the two towers that kind of just come out of nowhere. A ninety-meter and a hundred and twenty meter. They kind of just rise above the tree line and there's actually small elevators that are inside these two towers. We took the elevator up in the one hundred and twenty meter jump and this is the view that the ski jumper has when they're sitting ready to take off. It's just this huge, unbelievable, the picture doesn't even do it justice. It's just this huge ramp and they take off in flight. And I learned something while I was standing there looking over the edge. That's a long, long way down.

Just as a side, this really hasn't nothing to do with it. I learned something else last week that if you're going to leave your home during the Christmas holiday you ought to invite some friend to water your tree because this is what happened to our tree when we came home. That's not a green carpet below. Those are needles about an inch and a half of needles. We had just about a Charlie Brown, if we'd just stayed about a few more days we would have had a Charlie Brown Christmas tree. But, you learn all kinds of things at the spur of the moment.

But, you know when I was standing up there on that ski jump and I was thinking about this passage. Those athletes that strain forward and that's what Paul was saying. We have to use every fiber, all our discipline to strain forward towards the goal of Christ-likeness. We can't allow ourselves to get off track. So he says, you need to press on. An interesting word this word press on. It literally, in the original language means to persecute. So it fits actually the context. I press on, I pursue it like I'm persecuting it. I'm going to pursue it unrelentingly. I'm going to do it non-stop. Paul is basically saying we're going to continue stretching forward. We're going to press towards the goal. We're not going to let anything interrupt us. You got that? We're not going to let the past interrupt us. We're not going to let the unforgiveness interrupt us. We're not going let laziness. We're going to forge ahead towards the goal of Christ-likeness.

In fact, Solomon says something in the book of Proverbs that brings definition to all of this. He says, let your eyes look directly forward and your gaze be straight before you; ponder the path of your feet that all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left. Turn your food away from evil. Now listen to what he says. It's the Old Testament version of what Paul is saying. He says let your eyes look directly forward and your gaze be straight before you. You need to keep your eye on the prize and what's the prize? The prize is Christ-likeness. It's growing. It's spiritual growth. You can do a lot of things this year but what's going to have lasting impact in your life? Christ-likeness. You keep your eye on the prize. He says, ponder the path of your feet. Do you know what that means? That means make a plan. How are you going to do this? You can't just have a goal without any kind of plan. There's got to be some kind of plan to get you to the goal. That's your homework. Your homework is leaving here today saying what am I going to do to put this goal in place in 2012?

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Am I going to discipline myself in some type of study or reading of God's Word? Am I going to pick up one of the classes at Crossroads so I understand? Am I going to get involved in a House Church or a Small Group? Am I going to involved myself in volunteering in ministry? What can I do can actuate, to be involved, to be active in pursuing the goal because what happens when you set a goal? If you set a goal and you don't have a plan, a path to get there, well...the goal becomes like every other resolution that we've had throughout the years. We set it and somewhere within twenty-four, forty-eight hours we've already fallen off the wagon.

Paul, Solomon, they're saying ponder the path that all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or left. Listen, there's going to be lesser things that you can be involved in in 2012 and they're going to want to steal your attention. See, you keep straight the concept. I'm going to do my best to grow, grow in spiritual Christ-likeness this year. Do not swerve to the right or the left. Turn your foot away from evil and you will be tempted. You will be. Hands down. You'll be tempted before the end of the day. Keep your eye towards the cross of Christ. Say, I want to be like my Savior. Amen? Amen.

So, what do we do? We forget. We forgive. We forge forward. We forge ahead 2012. Now, the world had an opportunity to celebrate last night. That was their way of celebrating. But we have a different way in the church. We celebrate the day. We celebrate the day that Christ has given us that we can forget the past and we can move forward. Stand with me and let's celebrate as the church united, glorifying Jesus Christ that we forget what's behind, we forgive those around us. We forge forward into Christ-likeness.