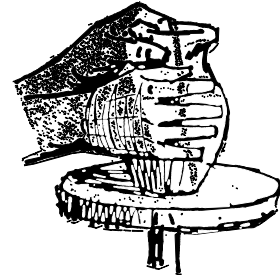


His Workmanship at Westside

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.”
—Ephesians 2:10



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Isaiah 64:8

Turn the Page in the New Year: Philippians 3:12-14 by Brian La Croix

On Wednesday we start 2014, and as with any new year, we have new opportunities. A new year an opportunity to start fresh on things. We usually have a number of things we'd like to accomplish, both personally and with the work of the church, and the new year is a great time to start things. We may set health goals, business goals, or even spiritual goals.

The old year is a great time to turn the page on the past and look forward—to put some things behind you. Paul did just that in Phil 3:12-14: *“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

We can learn five lessons from Paul:

1. We all have an imperfect past. None of us can look at our past and see nothing we aren't ashamed of. We all have blemishes and stains that we'd just as soon no one knew about or that we'd just as soon forget. The

apostle Paul was no different. He had a pretty ugly past in persecuting Christ and the church, and he had plenty of time to reflect on the shame of that. But we also have to remember that Paul was religious even before he met Christ. He was a Pharisee, he was an up-and-coming religious leader who had the trust of the religious establishment. He could quote Scripture, he probably attended the synagogue at least every week, see Phil 3:4-7. But none of his religion kept him from having a past that he became ashamed of.

You might have grown up in church, you might have been involved in church work, you might have been a church leader of some sort. But just the same, you have an imperfect past. It's imperfect because of the presence of sin in your life. It's imperfect because you have chosen your way over God's way many times. And there's no way to get away from that fact. But the second lesson we can learn from Paul is that...

2. We don't have to be a slave to that past. Paul could have said, “Look. I put people in prison, and I voted the death penalty for Christians I arrested. There is no hope for me, and there is no way I could ever be

used by Christ.” But he insisted here that he had something valuable worth moving on for. He could look back on the fact that Christ redeemed him from his past and was continually working in him. He wrote here that in spite of his past, he was moving on. How did he say it? *“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what's ahead.”* He recognized his past, but he refused to be a slave to it. Paul was a few years away from his death when he wrote this book. He was under house arrest, with a Roman guard there all the time, in a time when being a Christian was a pretty dangerous thing.

He could have said, “Well, I'm an old man, now. I guess I'll just plod along here and bide my time until they chop my head off, whenever that will be.” He had an imperfect past, but then he had had decades of fruitful ministry. He was the most successful evangelist in the history of the early church. And yet he still felt he had something to strive for and work for. He still felt that he had a path to go and a purpose in his relationship and service for Christ. In spite of his circumstances, he still wanted to strengthen his work from the past.

continued on p. 2

**"Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."
—Ephesians 4:22-24**

How many people look at their circumstances and decide that it's just not worth trying anymore? Way too many, that's for sure. They might think they've got it all together and don't need to work on strengthening their relationship with Christ. Or they may be in a particular life situation that causes them to think that it's not worth the effort.

But if we look to Paul here as our example, we can see that it's never too late, and our circumstances don't need to stand in the way of our effectiveness for Christ.

Lesson number three from Paul is that...

3. No matter our current circumstances, we can move on to better and greater things. Paul was an old man, under house arrest in Rome, just a few years from putting his head on the chopping block when he wrote this letter to the Philippians. He could have sat back and retired from living for Christ and from service, but he believed that he still had work to do. And more than that, He still needed to know Christ better. *"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," Phil 3:8-11.

Here's a man who had known Jesus for decades and probably had a relationship with Him that most folks could only dream of, and yet—it wasn't enough. It didn't matter that he was under house arrest. It didn't matter that he was an older man. It didn't matter what his current circumstance was. He needed more of Jesus, and he was willing to make the effort to make it happen.

And that leads us to the fourth lesson we can take from Paul, and that is that...

4. Moving on only happens by intentional, determined effort.

There's a word that doesn't fit well with learning to live for Christ and serve Him: convenience. I love convenience, and I love only working or praying or studying or whatever when it's convenient.

But listen to the words of Paul here in this passage: "I press on. Straining toward what is ahead, I press on." That goes against what most Christians would think it takes to know Christ and serve Him. Paul didn't allow his circumstances to get in the way—he didn't choose the convenient, comfortable, easy path. He did what it took within his current circumstance, without making excuses. He just did it. Christ was worth the effort for Paul, and if you'll make the effort, you'll find He is worth it for you as well. Paul was determined to move on from his past and from his present circumstances to gain more of Christ.

5. The goal is worth the effort.

Paul here calls the goal a prize. Not

a wage or a paycheck, but a prize—the upward call of God in Christ Jesus...attaining the resurrection from the dead.

When you focus on Christ and living for Him, you win.

So many people have a lukewarm relationship with Christ and no desire to live for Him because they see the work, but they don't see the prize. People will put a picture of a boat (or a trim body) on their fridge and work, work, work, putting in as much overtime as they can, scrimping and saving, sacrificing—so they can get that boat (or so they can lose that weight). But they won't do that for Christ. They'll work for what they can see, but not for the spiritual glory that helps the soul.

But Paul here said that everything that he did or had wasn't worth what he could gain through knowing Christ and serving Him. O, that more Christians could see the value of Christ like Paul did! God help all of us to see that the prize is worth the effort.

The bottom line of Paul's words here is that he decided to turn the page—on his past, and even on his present circumstances. He wanted to move on. And the new year gives us a great opportunity to do just that.

Let us suggest five things to turn the page on in this next year.

1. Turn the page on a lukewarm relationship with Christ. That's not what Jesus wants for you, and I can't imagine why anyone would want that if they really knew what God had in store for them. Jesus wants us to be on fire for Him—

continued on p. 3



Discipleship Here At Home

Turn the Page This Year, from p. 2 loving Him and living for Him in every area of our lives.

- Spend time in the Word and prayer. If you've never developed that habit, start today to spend five minutes reading in the New Testament and five minutes praying.
- Give up on half-hearted obedience to Jesus. Get past lip-service to lip-service. Jesus says that if we love Him, we'll obey Him. If we don't obey Him, then we don't really love Him.
- Strengthen your relationship with His bride—the church.

Whatever it takes, turn the page on a lukewarm, mediocre relationship with Christ.

2. Turn the page on unforgiveness.

You have been hurt. You may have been hurt badly. If you're holding onto those hurts and you've refused to forgive whoever hurt you, you are dying. Eph 4:26 says not to let the sun go down on your anger. Some of you have let hundreds and thousands of suns go down on your anger. "But they don't deserve forgiveness." I know. And Jesus knows that. But neither do you deserve forgiveness. Do you honestly believe you have the right to demand forgiveness from God? Truly, you don't have that right. Now pay attention here: you don't have the right to withhold forgiveness of others any more than you have the right to demand forgiveness for yourself.

Paul didn't sit in his house prison and say, "Those mean ol' Romans! I'll get them, that's for sure!" In fact, this whole letter to the Philippians is filled with his own joy and his encouragement to us to rejoice as well.

Don't let bitterness or unforgiveness

take root in your heart and rot your soul. Bitterness is like pus in your heart and soul. Who wants that poison churning and coursing through them? Nobody does.

"[Do not] fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, poison you, and defile many," Heb 12:15. Folks, when you choose to forgive and when you choose to drop the grudge, you are set free. You may not think you can do it, because the hurt is too great. But there are those who have had greater hurts than you who have been able to forgive. They couldn't do it, either. They needed the help of God Almighty to help them. So they asked Him for the strength to forgive just as Christ had forgiven them, cf. Lk 23:34, Ax 7:60. And He did. Bitterness is a chain on your soul. Break the chain by asking God to help you turn the page on your unforgiveness.

3. Turn the page on THAT sin. What do I mean by that? Most people have a sin, a spiritual weakness that they've struggled with and maybe even given up on conquering. You know what that is for you. Maybe it's lying. Maybe it's gossiping or breaking a confidence. Maybe it's looking at inappropriate material on the internet or TV or the DVD player. Maybe it's letting your eyes linger on a woman (Jesus calls that adultery, by the way, Mt 5:28). Maybe it's just plain laziness—and not taking responsibility for what's under your care. Maybe it's lack of courage and going along with the group when you know it's wrong. Maybe it's coarse language, Eph 5:4.

Whatever it is, you can start with this year to make it a thing of the past. Ask God to help you remove it and to get hold of any resources that might help you move on. Ask Him daily, even hourly, as you are tempted. You don't have to be captive to it any longer. In Christ we are set free—we can be slaves to righteousness instead of to sin and lust, Rm 6:7-18.

continued on p. 4

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help, and comfort here and away

Mark Campbell—home from hospital Fri; low bp, risk of clots, cardio issues; to return to Rocky Mtn Health Care Services in CO Springs this week

Melanie Baughn's mother—ill
Vicky Keyes, a friend of **Judy Sartin**—triple negative stage breast cancer; husband **Jim** shaken

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Logan Corray; Rocco Sangellino Jr; Addison Tope; Pat Wilkes—asthma
Pearl Chapman—to move to nursing care
Autumn Hadders—epilepsy

Jonathan Hadders—RA
Danielle Huelsman—vertigo, CV syndrome
Kirk Johnson—worsening MS; needs help around his house

Menards—aging; **Lloyd**, diabetes, weak;
Virginia, worsening rapid macular degeneration; high BP

Sandra Perry—neuropathy from diabetes; kidney failure, may need dialysis

Cheryl Reames—diverticulitis; fibromyalgia
Nell Free—pacemaker, heart; back pain

Judy Sartin—spinal stenosis; severe arthritis
Judy Sartin's grandson **Tristen**—autism

Lynda Szymanski—COPD, lung
Pat Wilkes—hyper parathyroidism; A-Fib
Philippine brethren—widespread typhoon damage for Christians in Leyte and Cebu

Traveling **Sarah McMurray** is visiting family in IN; **Mina Gonzalez** with family in AZ; the **Walkers** with family in TN; **Letha Fink** is in NM; **Justin Hambrick** is in TX.

Job concerns **Linda Szymanski**
Expecting **Liz Kosik**, early April—blood platelets low; **Christina Adams's** daughter **Kayla**, May

"Although no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending." —Carl Bard

Turn the Page in the New Year, from p. 3

Turn the page on that destructive behavior. Make this the year to overcome that sin.

4. Turn the page on handling God's money your way. Of everything on this list, this is the one that will probably get under people's skin the most.

Money is one of those areas that people cling to the tightest. Did you know that Jesus spoke more about money in Scripture than He did about heaven and hell? Why do you think that is? Because He knew how tightly we want to hang onto it.

But know this: it's not your money to begin with. Everything you have in terms of money or the ability to earn it is a gift from God. It's His, and if we'll listen to what He says about how to handle it, it'll go farther, and we'll have more peace about it, whether we have a little or a lot.

Take God's word for it. He's not a liar, and He knows what He's talking about. If you'll put into practice Biblical principles of handling God's money, you'll be pleasantly surprised at how God provides for His own people.

5. Turn the page on mediocrity. Mediocrity is the default position of life. Anybody can be mediocre, and most people are, especially when it comes to living for Christ and serving Him.

Excellence and glory are what God intends for us, Ps 16:3; Is 60:15. They are rarely attained without intentional effort. Not sinless perfection, but maturity in Christ. Excellence. Excellence steps us up to a whole new level, the level of wisdom, Eccl 7:12; Dan 5:14. Step it up in your:

- Relationships with others—especially your family, Pr 17:6; 1 Cor 11:7.
- Work, e.g., Pr 12:4; 31:10-31.
- Service within the church, Ps 66:2; Eph 5:27; Phil 1:10.

Jesus is our model for this. "And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, 'He has done all things well,'" Mk 7:37. When we work toward excellence, we reflect the work of Christ. So many people live in the rut of just getting along like they always have. Zig Ziglar says that a rut is just a grave with the ends kicked out. Get out of the rut you may be in.

Let us encourage this church as a whole to show the people around us that we always want to turn the page on the past and to strain toward what is ahead in our service for Christ.

Don't let this year be the same ol' same ol' you've done all the past years. Make this year the best year yet in your walk with Christ and your service for Him. Make this your year of excellence in Christ.

Children's Bible Class Curriculum Online

The children's Bible Class program at Westside (age 2 to sixth grade) may be reviewed at http://www.thechurchofchrist.com/media/uploads/members/Bible%20Class%20Program_2014.pdf or just go online to the church's website to the members section under member files (scroll down for document). Please remember, **parents have the primary responsibility to teach their children God's ways.** The classes at Westside are simply supplements to home study and reading of the Bible. Goals are 1) to know the whole counsel of God, Ax 20:27; 2) to grow up in all things unto Christ, Eph 4:11-15; and 3) to be able to teach others, 2 Tim 2:2.



meets at
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Preacher

Jim Reingrover (303) 973-5102

Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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This morning: "Getting Past Your Past," by Jim Reingrover

This afternoon: Jim Reingrover has a surprise.