

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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A Year Full Of Potential

Dear Friend,

For as long as I can remember, the first of the year has been a time when the Christian community seems to be filled with prognostications about what God is going to do this year. Anyone who seems to have any kind of voice among Christians has a “Word” from God about what **He is going to do this year.**

Please don’t think I’m saying God can’t speak to us about the future, in fact His Word tells us that He will show us things to come. (John 16:13) His Word also says that the young men will see visions and the old men will dream dreams. (Acts 2:17) I have absolutely no doubt that God does show us the future. In fact, God has shown me things to come and they turned out to be exactly right.

I’m referring to those who begin each year sounding much like a prophet of old with a “word” from God that this is the year of great things. I have heard some in the past, and witnessed for myself the lack of validity in those “words from God” and thought to myself, “They are fortunate that the penalty of death for falsely prophesying in God’s name isn’t in effect.” You see, prophets of old who misspoke in God’s stead only did it once. They did not get a second chance. If that were still the case I believe we wouldn’t hear nearly as many “words from God” about what is in store for us in the future.

Each second that passes puts us one second closer to the return of Jesus. But don’t think it is about seconds or minutes or hours or years. I don’t believe the return of Jesus is about a particular date on a calendar because if that were so wouldn’t it be possible to say that God somehow showed preference to people alive at that particular moment in time. It makes more sense to me that God is holding off just as long as He possibly can before calling for Jesus to return in order to give more people the opportunity to join His family, thus increasing the size of His family for all of eternity.

For those who choose to believe that God moves based on days and times my question to you is this, “what’s so special about any particular day”? One day is

no better or worse than another day and one year is no better or worse than another year in God's eyes. Do you really see God in heaven on the edge of His throne waiting for 12:01am, January 1, at which point He proclaims, "This is the year I have been waiting for to do something in the earth."?

If that were the case, my question to God would be this; "What about the dark ages, God, when all those innocent people were being lied to by so called religious leaders and told to give money to pay for their sins? Why didn't you move back then?" Certainly God loved those poor people just as much as He loves us today and yet how many died and went to hell believing a lie? Was it just not God's time back then to move and bless people?

The truth is, God always wants to move and bless people! When we buy into the idea that "this is the year God is going to do something" we are inadvertently agreeing with the notion that God picks and chooses one group of people over another or one time period over another. In other words, to believe this way requires us to believe that God has favorites. Once and for all we must settle it in ourselves that God does not have favorites, or as the Bible says, He is no respecter of persons.

This is the revelation Peter received on top of Simon the tanner's house in Joppa when the sheet was let down by the four corners and all manner of beasts appeared to him. God told him to kill and eat. This vision was God's way of revealing to Peter, and to us, that He was no respecter of persons. (Acts 10:34)

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."

God was showing Peter that He does not hold any group of people in higher esteem than another. The unclean beasts represented the Gentiles who were considered unclean under the law. The vision was illustrating to Peter, and us, that there was now no difference between Jews and Gentiles.

Paul went into more detail about the unity that is to exist now between those born Jewish and those not born Jewish in his letter to the Ephesians. (Ephesians 2:14-15)

"For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; (15) Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

The arrangement God had with the Jewish nation, in which they were bound to a set of rules and regulations called “the Law”, has been fulfilled in Jesus. According to what the Holy Ghost said through the Apostle Paul, there is now no difference between Jews and Gentiles and the “Law of commandments” has been abolished in the flesh of Christ Jesus. For us today, God holds no one group of people in higher esteem than another nor does He esteem any certain time period on earth as more special than another. In short, each day is full of as much opportunity to experience a move of God as the next. It’s up to us, not God, as to whether or not He has an opportunity to move in ours and others lives through our acts of faith and obedience to both His written word and individual directions.

“Mark, why is this so important anyway?” Here’s why. When we give ear to the “prophetic words” about what God is going to do this year or we buy into the notion that “this is God’s year to move” aren’t we unconsciously saying that God has everything predestined and we are just bystanders watching God do His thing?

Again, I do believe that God will show us things to come and that He does speak to us in dreams and visions. The point I am making is that somewhere along the way we have become programmed by people considered to be spiritual leaders into expecting the beginning of the year to be filled with prophetic words about the upcoming year. I believe this causes the hearers to take on the attitude; **“I can’t wait to see what God is going to do this year.”** This thinking removes any responsibility on our part and puts everything on God.

Thank God Paul didn’t think like this, “Boys, let’s just sit right here and see what God is going to do next.” **God is going to do whatever you give Him the opportunity to do in the earth through you!** Paul believed this and we see this by the life He lived. Once Jesus got Paul’s attention on the road to Damascus, whose name then was Saul, Paul’s life was spent sharing truth with whoever would listen to him.

Let’s look again at Paul’s experience in Macedonia as an illustration of God working through a man’s decision to follow Jesus’ command to; **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”** (Mark 16:15) If we apply today’s mentality to Paul’s experience we would expect to see something like this in Acts 15 prophesied by the leadership in Jerusalem prior to Paul’s second missionary journey. “I am going to do a new thing through you Paul in Macedonia this year.” Or, “This is the time for the Macedonians.” We would then see Paul making a beeline for Macedonia. But, that’s not at all what happened.

The events of Acts 15 and 16 make for a great case study on how God works through man's decisions under this New Covenant, guiding him along the way while man puts one foot in front of the other. It shows us how God's vantage point enables Him to utilize our good decisions, as well as, our less than perfect decisions in order to benefit His overall plan of spreading the gospel in all the earth, through those who are surrendered to Him. Paul wasn't waiting to hear a word for the "new year" in order to know whether or not; "this is the year God is going to move". Paul wasn't even waiting for a personal word of instruction from God laying out his travel plans for the future.

Whether we realize it or not, much of our thinking along these lines is still a carry-over from the false doctrine that emerged 100's of years ago about how God predestinated everyone and everything based on His preconceived plan. This doctrine went so far as to say that God had predestinated a person to either heaven or hell and the person had no choice in the matter. They believed He had everything all mapped out and we were destined to live out whatever plans God had for us.

That is patently wrong and when we allow ourselves to unconsciously adopt bits and pieces of this thinking we defeat ourselves. We end up sitting on the sidelines of life waiting for the next "word" from God telling us what He is going to do next. Or, we accept the idea that it really doesn't matter one way or the other what we do because God is ultimately in control of everything and everyone as if we are robots with no ability to choose anything.

Doesn't that sound like the devil? He loves to see well-meaning Christians sitting on the sidelines of life convinced that it's all in God's hands and they are only pawns manipulated by God. The Apostle Paul clearly wasn't waiting for God to say, "This year is My year to move." No, instead Paul made every day the day to share salvation with whoever would listen to him.

Notice the choice of words used to describe who would go on the missionary journey and where they would go. (Acts 15:22)

"Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas..."

Nothing was ever mentioned about going to Macedonia when they sent them out to preach. The express purpose of their mission to Antioch was to correct wrong doctrine that was being spread by others who had been sent out from Jerusalem. (Acts 15:24) Later after sharing the news in Antioch, there was a contentious disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark and Paul and

Barnabas parted ways. Paul chose Silas and continued on in Syria and Cilicia sharing the doctrine with the churches there.

At this point Paul had fulfilled all that was originally planned for their journey by the leadership in Jerusalem, according to the names of the cities listed in the letter. (Acts 15:23)

“...The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.”

I believe that most Christians today would have returned to Jerusalem after sharing the doctrine with the churches listed in the letter, either to please the leadership or out of fear of failure. Too many of us have become afraid to think outside the predetermined box established for us by other men. Apparently Paul wasn't looking for anyone to tell him what to do or not do. Neither was he sitting on his hands waiting for a word from God on where God wanted to move “this year”.

On the contrary, Paul's light was always “green” and he was going into all the world to preach the gospel. The next few verses in Acts 16 gives us tons of insight into how Paul approached God's mandate to “go”. God is telling Paul where **not** to go instead of where to go. How different is that compared to what we normally hear taught today about having to hear a word of instruction from God before doing something. (Acts 16:6)

“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach in Asia.”

The only reason I can think of why the Holy Ghost would have had to forbid Paul to preach in Asia was because he was already heading in that direction in the first place. Certainly we can't believe that the Holy Ghost told Paul to go to Asia and then told Paul not to go. Paul had made the decision to go and the Holy Ghost was redirecting him. Then, after being told not to preach in Asia, instead of sitting on their hands and waiting for a “word” from God, they headed towards Mysia, at which time they contemplated whether or not to go to Bithynia. (Acts 16:7)

“After they were come to Mysia, they assayed (meaning they weighed out in their minds) to go to Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.”

Think about it, after traveling for days and probably weeks or even months, they were **stopped** from going into Asia and then **stopped** from going into Bithynia.

Why? Did God not love those people? Certainly that was not the case. Was it just not their time to be saved? Salvation has been extended to every person. (2 Corinthians 6:2)

“...Now is the day of salvation.”

I'm not going to try and speak for God as to why He redirected them away from Asia and Bithynia. But I can say, based on God's word that it wasn't because it wasn't their time to be saved. Whether it was safety issues or simply that God knew that given the opportunity the Macedonian jailer would believe, along with his whole family, God chose to direct Paul and Silas into this man's life.

Thank God Paul wasn't waiting for some "prophet" to declare that this is "the year of the Macedonians" or a "word" from God to motivate him to do what God's word already mandated he was to do. What that really boils down to is a false sense of security in believing that when we stand in front of Jesus to give account for our lives we will be able to use the excuse, "God I didn't hear you tell me exactly what you wanted me to do." I believe He will look at us and say, "Did you not read in My word where I said 'Go'".

I'm preaching this message as much to myself as anyone because I too have fallen prey to the idea that we must wait on God to tell us every step to take in life. Thank God we have access to the Holy Spirit and His leadership to direct us as we step out and fulfill God's mandate to us to "Go".

This year is destined to be whatever kind of year you choose it to be for your life. Will this be a year of waiting to see what God is going to do next or is it going to be a year in which we step out in faith and do what God has already directed us to do in His written Word? The choice is ours.

Don't be brow beaten by those who are already sideline sitters into joining them and waiting for God to "sovereignly" move. Paul didn't sit on the sideline and neither should we. This year is chock-full of potential and it will be what we choose it to be. Choose to make this year the year that you stop waiting and start doing. If we will follow Paul's example, this year and every year thereafter will be the best years of our life filled with Godly results.

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins