

Advice for the Coming Year

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Preacher: Pastor Wolski

[0 : 0 0] to say thank you to those of you who braved the elements of coming up here in the pulpit on Thursday night, Barbara and Chris and Mike and Gary. So thanks for coming and having something to say. And I enjoyed just hearing from somebody other than myself. You can say amen there if you want to. But I just enjoyed hearing a little bit from you. And I, you know, that was the first time for me hearing for some of you that just how the Lord saved you or what he's doing in your life or just something at all from the scriptures. I enjoy getting a little more insight into who you are and how the Lord's dealing with you and just amen. So more of that to come, hopefully. If you have your Bible, let's go to the book of Ecclesiastes this morning. Ecclesiastes chapter 5.

Every time the calendar turns and we start a new year, it's always a new beginning.

And it's just the way we are, the way we are made up to roll that way, to try to put some things behind us and look forward to the future. And I want to just give you some thoughts this morning. It's not going to be deep, I assure you of that. It's just some things that maybe just call it some advice for this upcoming year that might prove, I believe, might prove beneficial to the quality of life that you live. And nobody in this room is, by any means, nobody knows or fully knows at all what's going to transpire in this year. And the Bible says, thou knowest not what a day may bring forth, much less a year. And surely last year at this time, no one saw the quality of life that we'd have lived and endured. No one saw that. And we didn't want it. But we had it. We had a truly a different year than I've ever experienced in my life. And whether this next year has its own difficulties, I'm sure it will. There'll be good times. There'll probably be bad times. There'll probably be ups. There'll probably be downs. There'll probably be victories. There'll probably be tragedies. Whether it's in your home or in your church or here or in this nation, there's just going to be ups and downs, things that come and go. And I think this morning I'd just like to give you some thoughts that I'll just call it just some advice for this upcoming year for 2021. Some biblical advice kind of really about the quality of life that you live, your mindset. And some of this might even sound a little bit self-help-ish, and I surely am not that guy. But maybe today that's just what we need for this time. Maybe a little balance here in the pulpit. Ecclesiastes chapter 5 and verse number 13.

And we'll read down to the end of the chapter. Ecclesiastes 5 verse 13. Solomon writes, says, There's a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

But those riches perish by evil travail. And he begeth a son, and there is nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go. And what profit hath he that hath labored for the wind? As he's dying, he's leaving the earth. He can't take any of it with him. It's like grasping at wind. And so he looks back and says, in that moment of time, what profit was there in all of that? Verse 17. All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness. Behold, that which I have seen, it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink and to enjoy the good of all his labor that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him, for it is his portion. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion and to rejoice in his labor, this is the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life, because God answereth him in the joy of his heart. Now in the passage, there's a little, maybe a little confusing in some of the wording of it. I want to just, I believe what Solomon's saying here is that God gives man the ability to enjoy things in this life, and there is plenty of negative things, sore evils that will compass a man in his life, and especially in his death. But to not remember the bad times, I think God gives us the ability to enjoy the good times, and when our attention is turned to the good things that God has given to us, and the plenty of good things that God has done for us, the negativity that is throughout one's life can kind of be put aside when we can allow God to, as he said, answer in the joy of his heart. He will not much remember the days of his life, those days being those evil days that he mentioned earlier in the passage in verse 16 and 17, sorrow and wrath and sickness. I think what Solomon says here in Ecclesiastes 5 is that the good times that we can experience in life can, in a sense, eliminate or overshadow the sorrowful times in life and the pain of the problems that we face. And let me say this by way of the first thought here this morning, some advice that I would give you for this upcoming year is to enjoy it. Don't endure it. Enjoy 2021.

[6 : 18] 2021. Don't endure 2021. Some of you have already braced yourself for what's going to happen in 2021. The new administration coming in, oh, you can already start by thinking that this mindset, I'm going to have to endure this and this and all these changes and I don't like it. And I want you to just put that away. And I want you to stop and then ponder what Solomon says in verse 18 that it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink and enjoy the good of all his labor that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him. God giveth him. In verse 19, it says that it is the gift of God.

I want you to learn or attempt to learn how to enjoy the good things that God allows in your life. the good things. And to do that, you're going to have to purposely focus on them. You're going to have to decide, God has given me and allowed this in my life. Shame on me for overlooking that to focus on the things I don't like. Shame on me for going around complaining all the time about the things I don't like or the way I wish it was. But rather, look at it as a gift of God because he's given you the power to enjoy and to power to eat thereof in verse 19 and to take your portion and to rejoice in your labor. It's a gift of God that you have to enjoy the health that you have, enjoy the ability that you have to do things in this life. It's up to you to make the choice to enjoy it rather than to endure it.

Sometimes you'll feel stuck and sometimes you will get overcome with sorrow. And that's natural. When bad things happen and pain comes, you can get overcome with it. And so maybe it's a good idea to take up a hobby. Maybe it's a good idea to find something that you enjoy in this life that God has given you and put yourself toward that. Do something that you enjoy. Because I don't believe God created any man or woman to sit around and to sulk. I don't believe he created us to mourn.

And there's some things that'll come and go, move on from them, and look back to this and say, God gave me this day as a gift. I want to enjoy it. I don't want to endure it. And I'll give you that as advice for this upcoming year. Look at it as something you can enjoy. Because it's a year, another year that God gives to you to live on his earth. It could be worse. And if you don't think so, then just park there for a moment and realize it could be far worse than it is in your life, in your family, in our nation, in our world. And it's going to get worse. So let's enjoy what God has given us in this year. God gave you a life to live, so enjoy it. Don't thumb your nose at him and the opportunities he's given you because you think there's something worth complaining about.

This life is God's gift to you and you only have one of them, so don't despise it. But I think that's good advice. Some people need it more than others because Christians can get into a funk. They can absolutely fall into some pit of pity and depression. And I've talked to more, I've heard of this from more men, and some of them were preachers that said they fell into depression.

[9 : 44] They fell into depression. They couldn't get out of it. And I don't understand that personally. Maybe one day it'll hit me. I don't know. But I haven't experienced it yet. And that's just never been my mindset to sit and pity myself. And I hope it's not yours. But if it is, then change the way you think about it. Look at the scripture and realize God gave me power to rejoice in my labor and the things that I put my heart to do. Enjoy it. Take up a hobby.

Yesterday, my family and I went up to Vasquez Rocks, and it was a blessing. It was a great time. I just got out of the car, and I enjoyed it right away. Just the sight. And then climbing, and then going up to the peaks, and doing cartwheels on the very top. No, I didn't do that. I wouldn't be here today. But I enjoyed just being out there. That was a blessing to me. Get back in the car to leave, and just thought by the line, praise the Lord. It was something fun that we could do as a family that was out there. Could have sat home and complained, Biden's going to get in and take away everything. But I enjoyed it. It didn't bother me a bit. Praise the Lord for those opportunities that can overshadow the bad things in life. It's up to you, though. So my advice for 2021 is look at it, entering it, that I'm going to enjoy it, not endure it. And for that, you're going to have to purpose to not focus on those evils and negative things that will be in this year. And to put your heart and your power toward rejoicing in that gift of God, those days that God has given you.

Look back, look at chapter 7 now, just a little bit across the page, perhaps, in the chapter 7. And notice what Solomon says in verse number 3.

Sorrow is better than laughter. Well, that almost seems like we're contradicting the first point, but follow this.

For by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better. The heart is made better. Now, there are things, and you have to have the balance, always the balance.

[11 : 55] There are going to be things that bring sorrow into your life, or sadness of your countenance. And it's my advice that you crawl out of that pit if you're stuck in it, and focus on the good.

But there are times when that pit, or when that sorrow, is good for you. There are going to be bad things that happen, or evil that will befall you. I'd probably say most of us will experience something that we're, if it's not just unpleasant, it could be just tragic.

It'll probably come to one degree or another. And these times can be a growing time for you. A growing time in life. A learning time where your heart can be made better.

Now, that's not the way you would think about it. You'd think, this is terrible, and it hurts, and I'm never going to get over it. It's going to change my life forever when the Scripture says, hey, your heart can be made better in this day.

You can come out of this better than you were before you went into it. And so, secondly, let me say, by way of advice for this year, is that through the troubles that you no doubt will face, grow better.

[13 : 04] Not bitter. Grow better. You will be tempted to get bitter when something negative happens. You will say, why me? Or, why God? Or, I don't like this.

Or, I would have, but you know what happened to me? Or, what happened to our family? Or, where we are? You would find an excuse to write it off and be done. Or, you could allow the Scripture and this advice to say, I'm going to grow better.

Look at 2 Corinthians with me this morning. 2 Corinthians chapter 1. There's a reason that God can allow things to happen to you, and does.

And it is possible to grow better and not bitter. And when you see it as an opportunity for God to grow you, take advantage of it.

2 Corinthians 1. And let's look at verses 4 and 5. I'll start in verse 3.

[14 : 03] Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, all of it, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abounded us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. Christ is in you. And that consolation rests within you and can abound into the lives of others.

God can bring us through things and then seek to use us because now we are equipped to be used. Because life has its ups and downs.

2021 will have its ups and downs. There's no doubt about it. The best way is to be prepared for it. You know what I'd say? Is expect something to happen.

Expect something bad to happen. Not walking around looking for it and shirking at it, but just expect there's something negative going to happen, big or small, and when it does, oh, well I knew that was coming.

[15 : 13] And I'm prepared to handle it. I'm prepared to deal with it. I'm prepared to allow it to grow me and to make me better in my heart. I'm not going to get bitter at this. I'm not going to let this knock me down and kick me out of the race.

I'm going to stick with it. Look back at Job chapter 1. Here's our example. Job chapter 1. What did this man do to earn what came his way?

For God to pick a fight with Satan and to use Job. Here's our example. Job chapter 1. If you expect trouble to come, then you can pre-plan your response to it to grow better.

In Job chapter 1, you understand I trust this first chapter of all that befell him in all of his loss. And in verse number 20, here's his response.

It shows you his character. Then Job arose and rent his mantle and shaved his head and fell down upon the ground and screamed at God.

[16 : 22] Fell down upon the ground and said, I give up. Say, get away from me. I'm not coming to church Sunday. He worshiped and said, naked came I out of my mother's womb.

Naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And all this Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly.

Now I challenge you to take any negative thing that's ever happened to you in your life and pin it against what Job experienced in that day.

All of that came at him one after another, one after another. And he experienced a whole blow at one time. And his response, didn't get bitter, did he?

I want to challenge you to grow better this year when bad things happen. Expect them to happen so that you can grow better and not bitter. So that it doesn't surprise you and blindsides you and take you out of the race.

[17 : 26] Come back to Ecclesiastes with me in chapter 9. Ecclesiastes chapter 9. So for 2021, enjoy it.

Don't endure it. And secondly, grow better, not bitter, through the troubles of this year. And thirdly, let's look at Ecclesiastes 9, verses 5 and 6, where the Bible says, For the living know that they shall die.

But the dead know not anything, neither have they any more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love and their hatred and their envy is now perished.

Neither have they any more portion forever in anything that is done under the sun. Now from an earthly perspective, that's the case that when you're dead and gone, as far as from this earth, you're gone.

You're not going to come back. You're not going to look from heaven and whisper things to people and show signs out in this nature. It's over. And it says in verse 5 that the memory of them is forgotten.

[18 : 38] And so from an earthly perspective, this is very true. Everything that a man or woman is, as they pass away, it perishes with them.

Except for just that little bit that can exist in our minds, the memories of them. And those memories, they fade. Daily, they slowly just disappear.

And so I want to give you some advice for this upcoming year that, I'll be honest, this is more sentimental than it is spiritual. But I think it's good. And I think it's healthy for your heart and for your families.

Take pictures. It might sound weird to you to say that from a pulpit on a Sunday morning. But take pictures. It's the best way to preserve a memory because we forget way too much.

And we don't sit around anymore and recall. We just watch TV. We don't sit around and talk and relive those times and those memories with those that we have.

[19 : 45] We just move on and we're busy and those memories just go and go and fade and they're gone. And so my advice is in order to avoid the dead, the memory of them being forgotten and one day it'll be you, is to take pictures because they allow you to cherish those who you love and the times that you spent with them and shared with them.

And when you know not what a day may bring forth, take pictures. Take pictures of your kids when they're young. My kids are, they're still young to some of you but to me, when I look at them, they're not so young.

I miss those little kids. Man, I miss them. And I'm thankful we have some pictures and some videos and I look at them and it gets me.

It gets me every time. Man, I miss those days. Take pictures of your kids when they're young. Document the gatherings you have with your loved ones because in the next year you may not all be together again.

And capture, if possible, the highlights of the life that God has given to you. I've been in a lot of funerals. Coming from the church we were at for years, it's a pretty large work and it has quite an outreach in families and funerals were a common thing at the church and I'd be part of them or lead the singing at it or have some small role.

[21 : 19] And I've been through so many of them. Some of them were complete strangers to me and others I knew through my years or ministry. But there's times where I'd sit before the service and they'd play a DVD or they'd just have it running while the line's coming through and they'd show a DVD of the person's life and in some cases complete strangers I'd get a glimpse, a decent glimpse of their life and be able to see them in 15 minutes picture after picture after picture after picture of them from their youth all the way up to children, marriage and things and into grandchildren and into elder years and great grandchildren in those cases.

It'd be interesting to see a person's life unfold like that. It'd really be intriguing to see the different stages of life. But for some people, for some, the video wouldn't be 15 minutes.

The video would be two. Because nobody took pictures. There was nothing to put up there. And it was sad. It was sad to me to think that that family has very little to hold on to anymore after that one's gone.

Very little to remember. And as a, I have a grandfather that passed away when I was six years old. My grandpa Wolski. And he was from Chicago area and he died when I was six.

I have, I have like the tiniest of memories of him. The things, when you, if you would say his name to me or if I say his name, the things that I think of though are the pictures that I've seen of him.

[22 : 52] I have very, very, very little personal experience to go from, from a child that stuck with me. But when I think of him, I think of the pictures that I've seen that others have taken and I can see there's one right now in my mind and if that picture wasn't there, I wouldn't even have a memory of him.

Very much to say at all. There was something interesting. My grandmother, Grandma Walski, passed away a few years ago and I was able to make the trip to Chicago to be with my family and to just be there for the funeral and one thing that I really enjoyed was after it was all said and done, we went back to my one uncle and aunt's house and we're down in their basement and it was just a crowd of us of the family of the brothers and sisters and grandkids and things and we're all sitting around and they pulled out this DVD which was of photographs that they had taken in the past that they had translated over and back in the 50s my grandfather purchased a pretty nice camera and it was pretty high end for that day and what a great thing it was because he took pictures of everything and they took pictures and so they transferred all these things over and we got to sit there and I got to experience my mom or my dad and his sisters and brothers and the grandkids all and just watch as they enjoyed reliving about 20 years of their childhood through all these pictures and places they'd been and trips to the Mississippi River to go camping and up into Wisconsin to an island in Lake Michigan and then all the things throughout the house and the life there and I remember sitting there just as a man looking at this thinking this is good this is so good for them to still have this together and they laughed and they cried and they remembered their father because there was pictures if there was no pictures the memory of him forgotten there's so many things in my life

I can't remember yesterday when we went to those rocks right away my wife and I both pulled out our phones and started snapping pictures of the kids and the rocks and videos of it and already the hours that we spent there most of it is gone but what I still have even just from yesterday I still have on my phone I got a little bit of it something that I could even take if I chose throughout my life as a memory so that's just some advice I told you it was more sentimental than it is spiritual but take pictures it's the best way to preserve the present for the future and to keep those memories because as Solomon said it's the gift of God to enjoy this life and don't allow your loved ones to be forgotten turn to Ecclesiastes or still in chapter 9 I'm sorry and I want to show you something a little later in this chapter to close out here Ecclesiastes 9 and my last bit of advice for this upcoming year is in verse number 10

Solomon says whatsoever thy hand findeth to do do it with thy might for there is no work nor device nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest do it with thy might Solomon is saying do your best whatever you find to do in this life do your best the apostle Paul says whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do do all to the glory of God now if I could put those two thoughts together from the apostle Paul and from Solomon the wisest king my advice to you in this upcoming year is to adopt this mindset and to make it the way you live your life is that you do your best for the Lord Jesus Christ did you do it in 2020 maybe you didn't but well you can start over huh

Paul said for to me to live is Christ there's a good place to start the advice I give is to do your best for the Lord Jesus Christ he deserves our best he absolutely deserves our best I went to a preacher's meeting I've gone to several over the years to these pastor schools and the things they have and the one one particular time I left so moved that there's so many things that I can make better in what I do as far as in the individual ministries I was involved with and I was really challenged to analyze each area and think of what can I do there what can be tweaked here what kind of stuff could be dropped and implemented and how can this grow and how can I grow and I was so moved to do that that it stuck with me that thought that you never arrive and there's always somebody doing something better or you can always adapt and make things more efficient and I really got moved at this pastor school to do those things and when I got back to the church we were under construction at the time doing renovations and they'd fallen behind and so the first day back at the church where I was so excited to do this

[28 : 24] I was up on the roof ripping out the old roof and the old tar that was up there and I was just like oh I did not come back here to work construction I came back here to fix all the ministries and get it going but I wanted to I got that I was moved inwardly to analyze every ministry that I was involved in and I started making some notes on what was working and what's maybe not working as well and do something about it and I challenge you to do the same thing in this upcoming year is to consider what is it that you do in your home at your job in your church what is it that you do and could you do it better you say well I do enough maybe you do but is what you do could you do it better I didn't say can you do more although maybe you could but could you do it better are you doing it with your might is the question and are you doing it for the glory of God it sounds like a new year's resolution decide that I'm going to do the best I can for the

Lord Jesus Christ maybe it's your relationship at home with your spouse or your children maybe it's something you do here in this church or some other ministry or something for the Lord that you're involved in my do for him so I'm just throwing out some thoughts I told you this isn't going to be deep some thoughts for the new year that I believe can be advice to help you adopt a mindset to come at this year with the right perspective the perspective that says I'm not going to just endure this trial of 2021 and wearing a mask and bowing down to the Democratic Party or whatever you're fearing just enjoy what

God's given you power to do enjoy that you're born of the spirit with life from above into God's family divine nobody can take that from you nobody can take that from you enjoy 2021 grow better through the trials when they come and they'll come and you'll be put to the test no doubt in small ways or big ways focus on being a blessing to someone else by growing better and then if you will if it strikes you take pictures take pictures to retain those memories and you'll be glad you did I'm sure of that finally it was to do your best for the Lord Jesus Christ there's just some thoughts and I think thoughts that I need to put into focus and to implement into my own spiritual walk with Jesus Christ while we all have aspirations I'm sure of making this a good year and maybe getting out of this 2020 funk let's move forward and get things back to normal for the child of

God I think can there be any greater aspiration than the hope of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ it's something that we can say it every day we could say it every week we could say it every year I hope this is the year but we have that hope we have that hope that the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall it's going to happen shall rise first then we which are alive and remain if the Lord allows we're going up brethren we which are alive remain shall meet the Lord in the air I'm going up I am going up if I don't go down first I'm going to meet him in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord brethren if this whole year is a bust we can still have that hope within us and I'm not going to let 2020 take it from me and

I'm not going to allow anything that happens in 2021 take it from me I have a hope in the Lord Jesus Christ that he's coming back so until that day my advice is do your best for Jesus Christ if there's something that you can get involved with take that step if God's working it on your heart about something let's talk about it maybe we can make it happen maybe we collectively as a church can take a step I have a theme I want to introduce for the year and I didn't get it together yet it's close but I want to introduce a theme for this church is growing together and by the grace of God I hope we can grow as a congregation in 2021 but I hope we can grow inwardly and grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and so that's my vision for 2021 and I'll unveil it here shortly Lord willing if the graphics are right but as I'm waiting for that I wanted to put it out in front of you this being the first week let's grow together let's make this year count let's do something for God let's move forward let's bow our heads together in a moment we'll be dismissed I don't know if you got into a funk in 2020 a lot of people have even

[34 : 03] Google is putting that out that that everybody's asking why and nobody's everybody's looking for answers and I can't help but see their ads and think they're not getting the answers Google is not giving the answers YouTube is not promoting the Lord Jesus Christ but this year it comes up we could maybe change our mind about some things we could maybe get it inside of us that we're going to enjoy what God's allowed us that we're going to grow better through this year in the trials that we face and that we're going to do our best for the Lord Jesus Christ I hope that you can say like Paul said for to me to live is Christ the Bible says in Colossians 3 that Christ who is our life I hope he's your life this morning Father as we come to a close this morning I pray that the words the advice given from the scripture would be taken and heeded Lord for some that maybe need it more than others that that your spirit would speak to their hearts would mend those things inside or even the distractions of this life the things we don't like God that we'd see past them that we'd see your your hand in our life and in the world around us that we'd focus on your will that we wouldn't get distracted from serving the Lord

Jesus Christ in this upcoming year that's why we're here so God help us to do it with our might help us to turn our attention and our love to you and forget about what this world wants and forget about the direction they're headed Lord help us to have compassion for the souls around us as well as each other and God I pray that you'll mend our hearts and unite us in unity and help us to have a common goal to grow to serve you and to see you do things that will bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ the Bible says unto him be glory in the church both now and forever and Lord that's my goal and desire as a pastor to lead this church to glorify the only begotten son of God so Lord bring us underneath that thought I pray that you'll help each one that needs to grow help each one that needs to get their mind cleared and help us to start this year refreshed and renewed in wisdom and in your might I pray this in Jesus name amen let's stand please to our feet 163 in the hymnal I just gave advice this morning it's all it was some thoughts that you can take or leave but I pray that you'll take them and I pray that they'll get into your heart and I pray