

## **20210103 Looking Ahead Into 2021**

### **Introduction**

P Tony- taking us through 1Peter- he- challenged us to examine how we live/walk as believers.

P Aaron talked- Letting Go so we can Hold Fast.

**Learning to let go of natural solutions to life's difficulties so we can hold fast to the promises of God.**

Jeremiah talked about perseverance ...

**The heartsick longing and diligent seeking of God through difficult times.**

Build on these words as we look ahead into 2021.

2020 was a difficult/tragic year for many ...

>covid-19 pandemic

>continual decay of moral values

>increasing disregard for human life

>the exposing of corruption-our government

>eroding away of religious freedoms

Alarming situation in Nevada ...

**Student- suing school- indoctrinating students in Critical Race Theory- forced to reveal his race, sexual orientation, religious identity in class so he could see himself an oppressor- be retrained. He was told to unlearn Judeo-Christian principles he had been taught at home.**

All of this is on top of our own personal difficulties, tragedies, failures, and sins of this past year.

Q: how do we posture ourselves in- new year?

### **Job and His Friends**

A while back P Tony taught from the book of Job.

Job went through tragic/difficult season in his life.

In one day ...

- >an enemy stole- donkeys- killed- servants
- >a fire from heaven consumed his sheep
- >another enemy raided his camels  
(donkeys, sheep, camels- Job's livelihood)
- >a great wind struck the house where his  
sons/daughters were gathered- killed
- >Satan smote Job with sore, oozing,  
infected, boils over his entire body

So bad, that his encouraging wife said to him ...

**Job 2:9“Curse God and die!”**

There is no doubt- this was a bad time- Job's life.  
But how did he respond ...

**Job 2:10 ... Shall we indeed accept good  
from God and not accept adversity?” ...**

Interesting picture in Job 4 ...

- >Job's friends- come- comfort/counsel him.
- >they sat with him- 7 days/nights and never  
said a word because of his great pain

At last, his friend Eliphaz speaks to Job.

You must be careful when- look at Job's friends  
and counsel they gave Job- not always godly.

However, Eliphaz starts by reviewing with Job  
how he has been such a blessing to others.

**Job 4:3-4 (NASB95)**

**<sup>3</sup>“Behold you have admonished many,  
And you have strengthened weak hands.**

**<sup>4</sup>“Your words have helped the tottering  
to stand, And you have strengthened  
feeble knees.**

Job cared for hurting people.

What an incredible testimony- before God/men.

Q: Should we not have the heart to bless others?  
(walk in here- not to get- but what can I give)

Eliphaz goes on- contrasts how Job is responding to his own tragedy-

**Job 4:5 “But now it has come to you, and you are impatient; It touches you, and you are dismayed.**

Job is a real person- he struggled like we might. Then Eliphaz reminds Job where his strength came from ...

**Job 4:6 “Is not your fear of God your confidence, And the integrity of your ways your hope?**

Should this not be where our strength comes from as well- Job ...

>had confidence in a good and just God who also judges sin

>was faithful to obey the ways of God

### **Cultural Response to Life’s Difficulties**

Contrast Job’s response to the cultural mindset today and how people face difficulties ...

>someone else is the cause of my problems

>not my fault

>life is unfair

>God let me down- did not answer- prayers

We become victims of everything that happens in our lives rather than seeing that we ...

**Ephesians 2:6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,**

We must live our lives with a view from eternity.

**Failures, disappointments, difficulties can be friends or foes depending on our response to them.**

We can get better or bitter.

Too often ...

**Disappointment is what we hide behind and accuse God of being unfaithful. Bill Johnson**

Rather than holding onto God and believing that

God is good/just/faithful- we choose to ...

>grumble/complain

>harbor resentment and bitterness

>live as victims in an unfair world

Stuart Greaves ...

**We were never intended to hold our own wounds above the wounds of Jesus Christ. Stuart Greaves**

When we do this it only brings more pain.

It is when we exalt the wounds He suffered for us, above our own wounds- find peace/hope.

Jesus tells us ...

**Jn 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**

This does not mean we will not face difficulties, but God delights in giving us abundant life.

As Steve Furtick said ...

**God use disappointments to develop us and the devil uses disappointments to discourage us. Steve Furtick**

**Victims or Victors** (we can be)

There are many things in life that we have no

control over ... BUT WE HAVE full control ...

... over how we respond to whatever

happens that we have no control over.

We have access to- unlimited resources- heaven.

**Romans 8:16–17 (NASB95)**

**16The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,  
17and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.**

Everything that belongs to the Father has been given to the Son and everything that belongs to the Son has been given to us.

It was William Gladstone who said ...

**My only hope for our country is in bringing the human mind into contact with divine revelation. Gladstone**

We need an ongoing revelation of Jesus Christ in the situations we are facing.

**Psalm 43:3 O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places.**

In 2021, I want to be more ...

- >God conscious than Covid conscious
- >promise focused than problem focused
- >kingdom centered than earthly centered

This does not mean we do not get involved in what is happening in the world around us.

**Vessel Available to God** (I want to make my)

Look at a story in 2 Kings 4 ...

**2 Kings 4:1–7 (NASB95)**

**1Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord; and the creditor has**

**come to take my two children to be his slaves.”**

**<sup>2</sup>Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” And she said, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.”**

**<sup>3</sup>Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, even empty vessels; do not get a few.**

**<sup>4</sup>“And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels, and you shall set aside what is full.”**

**<sup>5</sup>So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing the vessels to her and she poured.**

**<sup>6</sup>When the vessels were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.” And he said to her, “There is not one vessel more.” And the oil stopped.**

**<sup>7</sup>Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest.”**

The supply of oil stopped, not because the source of oil had dried up.

It stopped because the capacity to receive oil was no longer available- no more pots.

God desires to pour Himself out on us again and again- His resources are unlimited.

But we must constantly/continually make ourselves available for Him to pour into us. We must seek first His Kingdom/righteousness.

## **Strike the Ground**

Another story ...

### **2 Kings 13:14–19 (NASB95)**

**14**When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him ...

**15**Elisha said to him, “Take a bow and arrows.” So he took a bow and arrows.

**16**Then he said to the king of Israel, “Put your hand on the bow.” And he put his hand on it, then Elisha laid his hands on the king’s hands.

**17**He said, “Open the window toward the east,” and he opened it. Then Elisha said, “Shoot!” And he shot. And he said, “The Lord’s arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram; for you will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed them.”

**18**Then he said, “Take the arrows,” and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, “Strike the ground,” and he struck it three times and stopped.

**19**So the man of God was angry with him and said, “You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed it. But now you shall strike Aram only three times.”

This is a picture of the zeal God wants us to have for Him and His Kingdom.

How many times will we take a stand and hold on no matter how big/long the difficulties we face?

Will we strike- ground with our continual resolve to believe in God regardless of what happens?

Will we stand even if the answer does not come soon or the way we want it to come?

Our Challenge- is to ...

>set aside- past w/its failures/mistakes/sins

>replace unbelief w/faith/confidence in God

>release disappointment, resentment, and bitterness towards God/others ...

... and in faith embrace God's purpose for our lives- even if we do not understand.

**If I am only willing to obey God with what I understand, I am limiting God and making Him subject to my judgments.**

God wants to develop within us an unwavering confidence in who He is and His love for us.

## **A Warning**

It is possible for us to fear God and yet continue to serve our own gods/interests.

**Too often the great things of God have not been the predominant things: the lesser things of life have been allowed to absorb our interest, and the lure of the lesser loyalty has blurred our vision ...**

**Duncan Campbell**

God is demanding our full devotion and attention.

## **Back to Job**

Job lost everything- family, livelihood- all gone.

**Job 13:15-16 (NASB95)**

**15“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.**

**16“This also will be my salvation, For a godless man may not come before His presence.**

For all of Jobs struggles, no matter how ...

>unfairly he felt he was being treated or

>terrible his circumstances were

... he felt comfortable presenting his case to the Lord and expressing his frustrations to God.

He recognized- godless men do not have the this incredible privilege of coming before God.

He addressed God w/respect/recognized- God was all together different than him- not equals.

We also can approach God with confidence and reverence and present our case to Him.

## **Conclusion**

**"Every man has his own destiny: the only imperative is to follow it, to accept it, no matter where it leads him." - Henry Miller**

Consider Simon of Cyrene ...

**Mark 15:20–21 (NASB95)**

**20After they had mocked Him, they took the purple robe off Him and put His own garments on Him. And they led Him out to crucify Him.**

**21They pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear His cross.**

Simon- no control over what happened that day.

He was pressed into service, apart from his will,  
by the Romans, to carry the cross of Jesus.  
We have also been called by God to carry our  
own cross.

Simon had no choice- but we get to decide  
whether we will carry our cross faithfully or not.  
How many pots will we make available to God so  
He can pour into us His Holy Spirit?

How many times will we bang the arrows of  
resolve and hang onto God no matter what?  
These are questions we must answer individually.

**John 10:27 “My sheep hear My voice,  
and I know them, and they follow Me;**

Will we recognize God’s voice and follow Him no  
matter where life takes us in 2021?

The answer to these questions will determine our  
success in the eyes of God in 2021.

## **Additional Information**

There is much talk today about personal freedom, individual conscience, and liberty.

Bill of Rights- life/liberty/pursuit of happiness.

However- liberty in- Bill of Rights is not the liberty for the individual to do what he wants to do.

It is the liberty to do what is the right thing to do.

For a believer, we are held to a higher standard than the Constitution/Bill of Rights.

The liberty that God gives us is the liberty to do what the Lord would have us do.

This liberty is constrained by both the character of God and the principles of His Kingdom.

Yes we are free, but we are not free to be an idiot.

We do not get to chose what is right or wrong, fair or unfair- that is God's prerogative.

My responsibility- to bring my life- alignment with God's purposes for mankind/me as- individual.

## **Bitterness and Disappointment**

**Bitterness will enable you to become offended quickly. Protect your heart from someone else's bitterness.**

**Bitterness attaches us to the past.**

**Disappointment robs us of courage for the future.**

**Disappointment dislocates a person from their purpose and their destiny.**

**Disappointment is a thief that robs us of purpose and destiny.**

**The enemy keeps us focused and what did not work so we are useless for what does work.**

**God gives us promises to encourage us to embrace our dreams. Promises are a journey where we walk with God to see things happen in the earth.**

**People are searching for something that they cannot find outside of the presence of God.**

**When Moses fled to the desert, in his mind he was escaping the Egyptians. However, in reality God was drawing him toward his destiny.**

**Three maxims of life: (Larry Tomczak)**

- 1. Life is a series of choices**
- 2. Choices bring consequences (eventually, not always immediately)**
- 3. Choices determine destiny**

**Cursed Fig Tree**

**There's a message for us in the cursed fig tree. Jesus cursed it for not bearing fruit out of season. It died immediately. Was He unreasonable? He has the right to expect the fruit of the impossible from those He has created for the impossible.  
Bill Johnson**

**Jesus gave us all things because we would need all things to fulfill our call. He intends to fill the earth with His glory, and His glorious Bride will play a role. Bill Johnson**

**The promise of Christ's return does not give me permission to be irresponsible with Christ's commands. Bill Johnson**

**We must rid ourselves of the idea that Jesus is coming to rescue His church. That lie has ... put the Church into a defensive posture of occupation to protect what we have instead of positioning ourselves for the purpose of increase. Bill Johnson**

**We are first and foremost a people of God's presence. The Church is the eternal dwelling place of God. Bill Johnson**

**Failure only happens when you give up (The Knight Before Christmas).**