

- Paul concludes his second letter to the preacher Timothy with some very stirring words concerning his evaluation of his own life. Paul recognizes that the end is near. He is in prison, he believes his end is coming quickly, so he gives Timothy what amounts to these words of farewell that we are so familiar with. Paul uses some sporting terminology as he writes these words that I believe we can easily relate to. Paul, at this point, begins to review his life. To put it in sporting terms, he begins to review the tape of his life. He looks back on his life as a Christian and he is confident that he has done things the right way. He believes that he has fought this fight well. He believes that he has ran this race well. And finally he believes that there will be something great waiting for him in the near future.
- In this text Paul is doing what so many athletes do on a weekly basis, and he has done something that we tend to do as we close out another year on this earth. We take a step back for a moment and we review our life this year. This is an important thing for us to do because it gives us opportunity to take stock of where we are in this race of life and how we can be better in the future than we might have been in the past. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to take time to test themselves to see if they were still faithful to Jesus Christ. **(II Cor. 13:5)** With this example of Paul taking a moment to take stock in his life, I think we should spend this time of study reviewing the tape of our lives in this past year by asking ourselves some very important questions that will hopefully help us as we move forward as disciples of Christ.

I. We need to review our victories. (A victory is when we do what we were put on this earth to do, to fear God and keep His commandments. Ecclesiastes 12:13)

A. Where have we succeeded this year?

1. You might have become a Christian this year by dying with and committing yourself to Jesus Christ. **(Rom. 6:4)**
2. You might have already been a Christian before this year, but maybe you have finally defeated some kind of demon of sin that you have had in your life.
3. Maybe you have succeeded in committing yourself more fully to constant and daily study of God's Word.
4. Possibly you have stepped up and used your talents better for the Lord this year.

B. What was the cause of those victories?

1. We don't need to puff out our chests and take the credit for the good things of the last year. If we take the credit then we will quickly be humbled. **(Prov. 16:18; Rom. 12:3)**
2. We need to recognize that Christ has given us the strength to do what we need to do. **(Phil. 4:13)**
3. We need to give God the glory because without Him nothing at all would be possible. **(Rev. 4:11)**
4. We need to give thanks to God for the good that we can do because of Him and through Him. **(Col. 3:16)**
5. Bottom line in regards to our victories is this: Our success occur when we focus on and trust in God. **(Prov. 3:5,6)** He must receive all the credit that we can give to Him. Every good and perfect thing is from God. **(James 1:17)**

II. We need to review our shortcomings. (A short coming is when we fail to do what God desires for us to do)

A. Where have we struggled this year?

1. Maybe you have let another year slip by without giving Christ your life.... that's just another year wasted.
2. Maybe, as a Christian, you are still struggling with that same temptation of sin that you have always struggled with.
3. It might be that you have yet to commit yourself to steady Bible study and because of that you haven't grown at all in your faith over the past year.
4. Maybe you have let another year slip away without stepping up and doing more for the Lord. It's not that you don't have the ability, but you have simply decided that you're just not going to serve even though you have the ability.
5. Maybe you haven't grown in the role that you serve in this life as a husband, wife, father, mother, or whatever role it is you might be in.
6. Maybe you left the Lord this year because you just didn't see the point of continuing on in your faith.

B. What was the cause of those shortcomings?

1. The root cause of our shortcomings is a lack of focus on God and too much focus on and trusting in ourselves. Focusing on and trusting in ourselves is the quickest way to fail as a Christian. **(Prov. 3:5)**
2. When we dwell on and follow our desires then we will sin and fall short of glorifying God. **(James 1:14,15)**
3. You refuse to put away whatever it is that enables you to sin. Your fleshly desires outweigh your spiritual knowledge. **(Matt. 5:29,30)**
4. You don't care about spiritual things and all you want to do is fulfill the lust of the flesh because you love this world more than anything else. **(I John 2:15-17)**
5. Bottom line for our shortcomings lies in our choices to trust in ourselves more than we trust in God. Our lives will not be straight as long as we refuse to trust and focus on God. **(Prov. 3:5,6)**

III. We need to look towards the future.

A. What are our goals for this upcoming year?

1. If you have been successful then hopefully your goal is to continue that success for the Lord.
2. If you have continually been coming up short of God's expectations then you need to be resolved to do better.
3. The goal for Christians should be to simply live up to that name of Christian and be Christ like.
4. We need to strive to be what God desires for us to be. We need to see the importance of God in our lives and live in such a way that we honor His grace towards us through faithful service. Our goal should be to glorify God in all that we do.

B. What can I do that will help me be better this next year than last year?

1. First, we need to have our minds molded to the desires of God for us in this life. **(Rom. 12:1,2)**
2. Once we have the right mindset then we can see if we are living up to that standard that God expects of us.
3. We can know what God expects of us by reading His words to us in the Bible. **(II Tim. 3:16,17)**
4. We can be better by constant commitment to His Word and allowing it to do exactly what it is suppose to do, transform us for His glory.

When you review the tape of your life from this past year, what do you see? Do you see a disciple who is truly committed to Jesus Christ? Or do you see a person who only wears the name Christian in name only? Paul, when he looked back, realized that he had done things God's way. Because he did things God's way he knew that he had something great waiting on him in the next life. Are you looking for that crown of righteousness? If you are then you must remember that it is only reserved for those that are righteous. May God help us to be exactly what He expects for us to be. Worthy servants who simply want to honor and glorify Him in all that we do.