

Introduction:

1. It's a choice we make. How we view the future—the new year—is a choice. Should we be pessimists or optimists? Do we expect doom and gloom, or do we expect good days ahead?
 - a. An optimist has been defined as one who looks at the world through rose colored glasses. He is able to find good all around him. He has a positive, upbeat view of life.
 - b. A pessimist can be described as one who looks at the rose through world colored glasses. He finds nothing good even in the most beautiful of things. He has a negative, down view of life.
2. We live in a world where so many bad things can happen. It may not be easy to keep an optimistic view. Yet, through our faith in God, we can maintain a disposition that rises above the world, Philippians 4:5-7. Paul says “Be anxious for nothing...” It is anxiety about the future that plagues us.
 - a. Instead of anxiety and worry, we need optimism. It is our relationship with God that allows us to have a positive view of the future. We need to wear the right glasses as we view the future.
 - b. The apostle says we don't need to face the future with anxiety. We pray and trust God (v. 6).
 - c. We can have peace in our hearts; we don't have to worry about everything (v. 7).
3. Trust in God is cure for anxiety and helps us maintain a spirit of optimism. God wants us to trust our future to His hands.

The Lesson:

I. Optimism about your family's future.

- A. Success or failure in anything can depend on the disposition a person brings to that thing.
 1. The most successful people in business, politics or education are those who have an optimistic view of the future. They believe in the success of what they are doing.
 2. By contrast, when people are pessimistic and believe they will fail, they typically fail. Your sense of optimism and belief (or lack thereof) can impact how you approach things, and can even become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The example of the Israelites makes the point, Numbers 13:26-33. The people believed the bad report, and refused to go into the land.
 3. Numerous passages confirm the principle, Proverbs 4:23; Philippians 4:13. Consider this final passage; if a person believes he cannot succeed as a Christian, will he succeed? We must believe and have a sense of optimism in what we are doing.
- B. With respect to your family's future (particularly your marriage), you need a spirit of optimism.
 1. See your marriage through the lens of permanence. You need to believe in staying together, and believe that good things are ahead in your home, Matthew 19:6.
 2. See challenges in your home through the lens of problem-solving. You and your spouse can together solve any problem that arises, Philippians 4:13.
 3. See your family life through the lens of forgiveness and forbearance. What your family needs is needed in every relationship in life, Colossians 3:12-13, 18-19.

II. Optimism about the church's future.

- A. An old preacher (W.W. Otey) said one of the marks of identity of the church in the New Testament is that it always had problems—either from within or without. He was right. And it will always be that way. Does that throw cold water on our optimism about the future? When we look at how far we have come we are forced to be optimistic about where we are going.
- B. The same things that give us optimism about the family give us optimism about the church.
 - 1. See the church through the lens of permanence. The kingdom of Christ is the one thing that will stand forever, Daniel 2:44. To be in it gives stability to our lives.
 - 2. See the challenges in the church through the lens of problem-solving. There is no such thing as an organization that does not face problems and challenges. If we follow God's will, every challenge can be met, Philippians 4:13. Our God has equipped us for every problem and every eventuality, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Don't wring your hands when problems arise. Go to the book of God and do what God says! Everything is going to be OK.
 - 3. See our church life together through the lens of forgiveness and forbearance. As long as our congregation has people in it, there will be a need for forgiveness and forbearance. We never intend to hurt or injure one another, but sometimes we do. We need forgiveness just like early saints did, Colossians 3:12-13. "How long do we have to be forbearing of one another?" Just as long as we want this church to *survive* and *thrive*!
- C. We don't know what the future holds for our congregation, but we know who holds our future. This is about trusting God and doing His will. Do that and He will bless us.

III. Optimism about our eternal destiny.

- A. If we trust in God, we can live with an optimistic view of our eternal destiny.
 - 1. John 14:1-5. In these passages Jesus tells us to trust Him with our eternity.
 - 2. Many folks are afraid to die because they don't know what to expect. That shouldn't be us. Jesus says He is preparing a place in heaven for those who serve Him.
 - 3. Most folks look at death as the end. It may be the end of everything good for most people. But for us, it is the beginning of things so good we can't fathom them.
- B. See how Paul viewed death, Philippians 1:21. We need to see eternity through Paul's lenses.
 - 1. He said to die is gain. Things were going to be better for him than what he had on earth.
 - 2. Why would things be better? Because when he died, real living began.
 - 3. We need to have the same view of eternity as Paul. This isn't just for him. It is for us.

Conclusion:

- 1. Jesus promised peace and comfort when we die. Trust Him! It will change our lives when we do.
- 2. There is no better time to make changes in your life than right now. Walk with a spirit of optimism. Trust God. The result? Peace of mind now, and wonderful blessings in the future!