

SPECIAL DEVOTIONAL

A NEW BEGINNING

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”
Ephesians 5:15-17, NKJV

Before entering the new year, people usually take some time to reflect and evaluate what they have done and what has happened in their lives throughout the past year. Why is that? Because everyone certainly expects a better life with improved quality of life, hoping for new and good things to happen in the new year. Likewise, we surely expect a life that is increasingly blessed by God.

But what would be the base for God to bless us and make new things in our lives if we do not do His will? Paul reminded the church at Ephesus to look closely at how they lived; do they live as wise people or as fools? What distinguishes the fools and the wise? It can be seen from the way they use their time. A fool uses his time to love the world but the wise uses his time to do the will of God. The Word of God says: *“Do not love the world or the things in the world... For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”* **1 John 2: 15-17, NKJV**

1. PRIORITIES OF THE FOOLS

- **The Lust of the Flesh**

Fleshly desire seeks immediate gratification. This desire will result in the deeds of the flesh. Paul warned the Galatian church so they didn't live according to fleshly desires like sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God; they will lose the power and presence of God that has preserved their lives and saved them.

- **The Lust of the Eyes**

The lust of the eyes is something that everyone has. It also speaks of greed. The incident of David and Bathsheba reminds us of David's greed. David wanted to have Bathsheba, who had a beautiful appearance, while she already had a husband. David's greed resulted in adultery, lie, evilness, and murder. As result, the child that Bathsheba delivered died and the sword would not depart from David's dynasty forever.

- **The Pride of Life**

The pride of life refers to whatever there is that tends to promote pride (arrogance). Haman son of Hammedatha was honored by King Ahasuerus. All the king's servants had to kneel down and bow down to him. But a man named Mordecai refused to kneel and bow down to Haman. Haman was filled with rage against Mordecai so he made a plan to hang Mordecai, and even to kill all the Jews who lived throughout the Persian empire. But eventually, Haman was hanged on the gallows that had originally been built to hang Mordecai. Mordecai and all the Jews were spared.

2. PRIORITIES OF THE WISE

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” **Romans 12:2, NKJV**

- **God's Good Will**

Good deeds "*agathos*" good/useful.

In the story of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16-26, the young ruler asked Jesus what good thing should he do that he might have eternal life; and Jesus told him to keep God's commandments, such as 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. God's good will is: to be obedient to God's commandments or to live in holiness.

- **God's Acceptable Will**

Acceptable "*euresteo*" is well pleasing/ please the heart of God.

Enoch pleased God's heart because he walked faithfully with God all the days of his life that he didn't experience death because God took him away.

God's Acceptable will is: Intimacy with God.

- **God's Perfect Will**

The meaning of the word "*Teleios*" is complete, perfect.

When the rich young ruler said: All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus replied the young man: "*If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.*"

When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. God's perfect will is to follow Jesus. Paul said:

"For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." **1 Corinthians 6:20, NKJV**

In order to be sensitive in knowing the will of God, Paul says that we need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Why? Because the renewing of our mind and the transformation of our behavior begin with the transformation of our mindset.

For all of us who long to experience the new things that the Lord will do for us in the year of '*Ayin Chet*', this is the perfect time to evaluate ourselves; whether our lives have been acceptable to the Lord or not.

Why do we have to evaluate ourselves? To know what we have done for God so far. How have we been using our time so far? Do we use our time to do the will of the Lord or to satisfy the lust of the world?

God's Word says: "*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" It is impossible that God will do new things for those who do not love Him. Even the Word of God says that the world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

Therefore, let's use our time in this new year to do what God desires, so our lives will always be acceptable and pleasing to His heart. Then we will experience the promises of God; blessings as well as new and good things will happen in our lives, not only in this year of '*Ayin Chet*', but also until eternal life.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

Matthew 7:21, NKJV