

Good Riddance Day

II Corinthians 2:5-11

PW Emerson – 01/19/2020 – Ten:27 Ministries

The beginning of the new year, I like to take a few weeks and look at big questions, thoughts to help set us on the right track for the new year.

Today: Good Riddance Day! It's an unofficial holiday on December 28.

Good Riddance Day is inspired by a Latin American tradition in which New Year's revelers stuffed dolls with objects representing bad memories before setting them on fire.

This past year it was sponsored by the Times Square Alliance, when people came together, wrote down things from the past ...

- Unpleasant memories
- Embarrassing memories
- Hurtful times

Then they shred them, so they can start fresh in the new year.

I looked online and found pictures of people's "Good Riddance Day Notes" and things they want to leave in the past:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Jealously
- Toxic people
- Cheating
- Procrastination

- Self-loathing

And much more

In today's piece, the apostle Paul is looking a forgiveness, people we need to forgive.

2 Corinthians 2:5-11

⁵If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent—not to put it too severely. ⁶The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. ⁷Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹Another reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. ¹⁰Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, ¹¹in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Paul challenges the Christians at Corinth to reach out and forgive a man in the congregation who had sinned.

There are 2 things true about the human condition:

- We always need forgiveness
- We always have someone we need to forgive

We have certainly talked about forgiveness in the past.

But it is worth revisiting.

My experience is that forgiveness is something we all struggle with

- When someone cuts you off in traffic, forgiveness is not the first thing that comes to mind
- When someone has hurt you, forgiveness is not the first thing that comes to mind
- When someone has hurt someone close to you, forgiveness is not what comes to mind
- When someone close to you has wronged you, forgiveness is not the first thing that comes to mind. You're hurt!

When someone has hurt you, it's ok

- Not to trust that person
- To keep that person at arms length

BUT

When that person repents, asks for forgiveness, then that's what we need to do.

In verse 6, Paul wrote:

“The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient.

The church had taken some action about that person.

Experts say that the church excommunicated the offender.

It was done for the sake of the offender, that he/she would learn a lesson, and to pretext the rest of the people.

It may not have been easy to put out that person, but it was appropriate.

Proverbs 27:6

Wounds from a friend can be trusted,
but an enemy multiplies kisses.

Paul appears to agree with their decision to discipline the person – however that was done.

But the time had come to forgive him and receive him back into the church.

Consider the words of David ...

Psalm 103:8-9

ªThe LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.

ªHe will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;

Sometimes we think that if we forgive too quickly or too easily, that we are being too soft or easy on the offender.

But remember the story of the Prodigal Son – when the son came back, the father RAN to embrace him.

God embraces us when we ask for forgiveness.

We too should embrace forgiveness.

The forgiveness we give may restore the offender!

How was the Prodigal son changed by his father's forgiveness?

Look what Paul says in verse 8 of today's text:

ªI urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.

When we forgive, we are showing love.

Notice that Paul never names the person being referred to.

Paul doesn't want to pile up shame.

Our discipline and our forgiveness ought to be tempered by a desire not to smear someone's reputation unnecessarily.

In this age of instant communication via

- Facebook
- Twitter
- instant messaging
- Snapshat
- when we can post anything on YouTube for all the world to see

We would do well to follow Paul's example.

- Love doesn't smear someone.
- Love doesn't humiliate others.
- Love covers a multitude of sins.

I am reminded of a line from the song "They'll know we are Christians by our love" that says "We will guard each man's dignity and save each man's pride."

I'm sure we can all think of someone we need to forgive.

That's a name to write down on your Good Riddance Sheet

And really mean it in how you treat that person going forward in the new year.

But when we think about things to which we need to say GOOD RIDDANCE, and leave them behind and not bring them into the new year, it's not just about

- a grudge
- anger
- hatred
- bitterness

we have against someone.

It's also some of the habits we need to change about ourselves.

People do a LOT to try and change their outward appearance

- a new hair style
- clothes that are more up-to-date
- lose some weight
- put on some muscle

But ...

More important than what's on the outside is what's on the inside.

Think about the struggles of your own life. What would you change about yourself on the inside if you could?

- Would it be an impatient spirit?
- Would it be a critical tongue?
- Would it be envy of those around you?
- Would it be a spirit of discontentment?
- Would it be lingering resentment?
- Would it be lust you can't conquer?
- Would it be financial mismanagement?

- Would it be a guilty conscience?
- Would it be an inability to work with others?
- Would it be overbearing stubbornness?
- Would it be a judgmental spirit?
- Would it be a quick temper?
- Would it be profound discouragement?
- Would it be an inability to appreciate life?
- Would it be an ungrateful spirit?
- Would it be a disorganized life?
- Would it be an inability to say no?
- Would it be a mean streak you can't seem to get rid of?

Changes on the inside are much harder.

That's why there are countless motivational speakers, telling us how to change.

Book stores have MANY bookcases filled with self-help books.

But they seem to bring about real change for most people.

When talking about forgiveness I used the piece from Paul because he KNEW about the need for real forgiveness.

Paul is a first-hand example of how to change, on the inside, permanently!

Acts 9:1-19

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to

Jerusalem. ³As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹²In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

¹⁷Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

God brings about change like nothing else in the world.

God took a murderous zealot, out to destroy “The Way” an early name for Christians, and transformed him into one of Christianity’s greatest evangelists.

You think you’re struggling against bad habits of

- Procrastination
- Lust
- Anger management

And more

It’s good to want to change those things!

The best way is to give them up to God.

When I face struggles of anxiety or doubt or fear or whatever, one of the things I do is repeat Psalm 23, over and over and over.

It’s a great prayer!

I did this quite a bit a few weeks ago when I was flying – flying makes me anxious.

But I won’t avoid flying because I won’t let my fears control me.

So I’ll fly. And I say Psalm 23, over and over.

What’s that habit you want to change?

Write it down on your GOOD RIDDANCE SHEET and pray to God about it.

When you feel that habit or struggle coming on, pray to God about it

Say Psalm 23 – as many times as it takes.

There was a Christian singer in the 90s who would sing about evolution – Jeff Moore. He said evolution isn't animals transforming over the course of several millennia, rather evolution is God changing the heart and renewing the mind.

Paul understands GOOD RIDDANCE as well as anyone.
He practiced saying GOOD RIDDANCE to life without Christ.
He practiced saying GOOD RIDDANCE to ungodly ways.
And he experienced first-hand the transforming power of God.

2 Corinthians 3:18

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate^[a] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Paul learned that God will change us, each of us, if we let him.

Some people will change when they see the light. Others change only when they feel the heat.

Sir Isaac Newton, the father of modern physics, said,

Everything continues in its same state unless it is compelled to change by forces impressed upon it.

If you want to change, get the force of God on it

Take a few minutes. Think about what you want to leave behind in 2019.

Write them on your GOOD RIDDANCE SHEETS. Then fold them and fold them and fold them.

Then we will pray and ask God to help us with this.

After worship, we're going to burn them outside.

Anytime you struggle with one of them

- Talk to God
- Pray
- Say Psalm 23
- Say it many times
- Call me
- Text me
- I can pray for you, pray with you.

But when you leave here today, leave those things in the past. Say GOOD RIDDANCE to them!