



Touching Lives
with James Merritt



SERMON SINGLES

Happy New You

Philippians 3:10-14

INTRODUCTION

Forty percent of the people who make New Year’s resolutions break them by the end of January. Seventy-five percent will have broken them by Valentine’s Day. That is why I want to propose that what we need is not a New Year’s resolution, but a New Year’s revolution - real change that can mean a happy new you for this happy New Year. A man by the name of Paul sitting in a Roman prison of all places gives us a perfect way to do that. In Philippians chapter 3, he gives us three simple things that if we do them on a daily basis every day can bring a happy new you. They are doable, all achievable and all possible. What is really great is if you will do these things, they will not necessarily take you where you think you need to go, but they will take you farther than that. They will take you where God wants you to go.

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KEY POINTS

1. Leave The Past

Did you make any mistakes last year? Have any failures? Wish you had a few do-overs? Want the old you to become a new you? Step one is just admitting it. We need to take the baggage of the past that we need to quit carrying in the present. You can’t focus on where you need to go until you forget where you’ve been. You cannot sail the ship of your life on the seas of the present and toward the horizon of the future if your anchor is stuck in the mud of the past. You can’t run forward if you are always looking backward.

The past does not have to define you. The past does not have to dominate you. The past does not have to destroy you. There are a lot of things in our past that we need to remember to forget. Don’t misunderstand what Paul is saying, “forgetting what is behind...” It doesn’t mean “to fail to remember.” There is no way you can ever totally erase the past from your memory. The word “forgive” means “don’t be influenced or effected by it.”

2. Live In The Present

Once you put your past where it belongs (which is the rearview mirror) then you can put the present where it belongs (on the windshield). Do you know what the most important day in your life is? It is today, because that is the only day you have. Mother Teresa said, “Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We only have today. Let us begin.”

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You want every day to see a happy new you? When you are at work or at play, whether you are at an office or a gymnasium, you make it your one goal to point people to Jesus and inspire them to live the life devoted to Jesus today, by knowing Jesus better, growing in Jesus stronger, and showing Jesus more clearly. May we only focus on today as we serve and grow in Him.

3. Look To The Future

The truth is yesterday prepares you for today, but today does prepare you for tomorrow. As you look to the future, Paul repeats a phrase twice in this passage. He says in verse twelve and verse fourteen, "I press on..." You do live in the present. You must live as if tomorrow will never come, but you should also live in such a way that you are ready if it does. You may not have picked this up, but Paul is actually talking about an athlete. He is describing a race, because that is what life is. What Paul is reminding us of is that no matter how dark tomorrow may look, no matter how dire my circumstances may be, no matter how discouraging things may appear, I am going to press on. I am going to keep running. I won't be deterred. I won't detoured. I won't be distracted.

When every runner begins a race he always knows where the finish line is and what the finish line looks like. There is one thing he knows he can't quit doing – stop running. I said this before and I'll say it again. I don't find retirement in the Bible. I am not saying it is wrong to retire from a job that you have had in the past, but as long as you've got a breath in you, God's got a job for you to do in the future. There is one line of work you should never get out of and that is working in God's church, working with God's people, and working for God's glory.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is something about your past that you can't seem to let go of? What is keeping you from letting go of it?
2. Do you find yourself focusing on the past or the future more? How is this focus holding you back?
3. What is something you've been focused on too much about the future that isn't something you can deal with today? Release that thing to the Lord in prayer.
