

2019 New Year Message Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, January 13, 2019

Main Theme – Beginning 2019 with a word from the Lord re: adjusting our expectations in Christ.

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Week of Prayer & Fasting – January 14–18 (Sign-Up Start TODAY)
- Workshop – Biblical Principles of Finance w/ Ginger (February 22–23)

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers. Two offerings will be collected today:

- The FIRST offering goes to support the ongoing ministry/function of this assembly
- The SECOND offering goes to support a variety of missionaries (foreign/domestic)

May the Lord BLESS YOU as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The 2018 Annual Business Meeting will be held next Sunday, January 20, 2019 following the Sunday Service. The 2018 Annual Report will be distributed today to the voting membership. Please read it and bring it with you to the Annual Meeting.

-
- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH**
-

2019 New Year Message Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, January 13, 2019

Main Theme – Beginning 2019 with a word from the Lord re: adjusting our expectations in Christ.

INTRODUCTIONS

As always it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these moments of corporate worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today (as we move along into 2019). Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

Last Sunday I offered a word that I believe has prophetic edge. As the Pastor of this assembly, I offered a word from the Lord that is to inform and impact our spiritual trajectory in 2019. Allow me a moment to REPEAT what the Lord spoke to my heart in weeks past (let us hear what He is saying in this hour):

“My people suffer from low expectations of Me, what life can be in Me, and from low expectations of themselves” (REPEAT).

-We EXPECT too little of the Lord, life/living in Him and of ourselves

-We ANTICIPATE/LOOK FOR too little of the Lord, life/living in Him and of ourselves

KEY – As was noted, perhaps we DESIRE too little of Him, of life in Him and for ourselves. To quote C. S. Lewis (renowned author and theologian) once again:

It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are too easily pleased.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

LAST Sunday I addressed the theme of greater expectations AS IT RELATES TO the Lord and life in Him. If you were NOT here, I highly recommend listening to that sermon online and/or reading through the digital notes that have been made available. Time will NOT permit me to offer any form of summation today.

KEY – This morning I want to share thoughts related to the latter portion of this overarching word:

“My people suffer from low expectations of Me, what life can be in Me, AND FROM LOW EXPECTATIONS OF THEMSELVES” (REPEAT).

NOTE – There is much to be said concerning these remarks. Thus, I have chosen to take two Sunday mornings (today and next week) to bring forth some necessary comments/applications. Thus said, let’s delve into today’s thoughts.

TO THE POINT

Q. In what way do we expect too little of ourselves?

A. We are too tolerant of personal sin, negligence and spiritual immaturity; lax in sp. obligations.

KEY – We should be a people who demand/expect more of ourselves as followers of Christ Jesus.

NOTE – We are CHRISTIANS. We are commanded to live according to our NAMESAKE & CALLING:

Ephesians 4:1 (NIV)

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Philippians 1:27 (NIV)

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

NOTE – We are NOT called to continue in or tolerate a life of sinful living and spiritual stagnancy:

Romans 6:11b–13 (NIV)

11 . . . Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:15 (NIV)

15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

NOTE – Scripture only offers ONE call to the wayward and worldly church: the call to REPENT...

James 4:8–10 (NIV)

8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Revelation 3:14–19 (NIV)

14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.

KEY – We live in an age where spiritual compromise, negligence and immaturity ABOUND in the Church of Jesus Christ. We have become FAR TOO TOLERANT of such things, expecting precious little of ourselves. It is time for FAR GREATER EXPECTATIONS.

IT’S AMAZING

SHIFTING GEARS A BIT . . .

KEY 1 – It is amazing how MUCH we expect of the LORD, but how LITTLE we expect of ourselves:

- We expect for God to love us, but excuse our lack of love in response
- We expect for God to be faithful, but tolerate gross indifference in response
- We expect for God to speak to us, but fail to take the time to gen. listen and apply
- We expect God to give to us, but spurn His command to invest in what matters to Him

KEY 2 – It is amazing how MUCH we expect of OTHERS, but how LITTLE we expect of ourselves:

- We expect others to be trustworthy, but we tolerate personal dishonesty
- We expect others to support us in crisis, but excuse our capacity to reciprocate
- We expect others to be kind to us, but abide our own capacities to be cruel & rude
- We expect others to show us gen respect, but practice the most abhorrent disrespect

KEY 3 – This even spills over into our CHURCH life!

- We expect people to greet us when we walk in, but we're OK to walk by a room full of visitors
- We expect a bountiful potluck supper, but we simply didn't have the time to 'make' anything
- We expect a fully-staffed and well-run nursery for our children, but are content not to help
- We expect the worship team to be prayed up and the Pastor to have a word from heaven

...Yet we can EASILY excuse missing one, two, three or four Sundays a month!

AN ILLUSTRATION

NOTE – Let us be WARY of such compromised living. This is NOT how Christ has called us to live!

ILL – The story is told of a man who prided himself on his morality. He would continually say things like, "I'm doing pretty well on the whole. I sometimes get mad and swear, but then I am an honest man. I do watch questionable movies and have a lust problem, but I give a good deal to the poor and I don't beat my wife."

In the course of time, he hired a neighbor to build a fence around his pasture. When the neighbor came in from his work, the man said: "Is the fence built? Is it tight and strong?"

The neighbor replied, "I cannot say that it is ALL tight and strong, but it's a good, average fence. If some parts are a little weak, other parts are extra strong. There may be a gap here and there, but I made up for it by doubling the rails on each side. I daresay the cattle will find it a good fence on the whole."

"What!" cried the man! "Do you mean to tell me that you built my fence with weak places and gaps in it? You might as well have built no fence at all! If there is even one opening or weak point, the cattle will be sure to find it and go through. Don't you know that a fence must be strong and complete or it is worthless?"

"I used to think so," said the man. But I hear you talk so much about averaging out matters with the Lord, it seemed to me we might try it with the cattle. If an average fence will not do it for the cattle, I am afraid an average character will not do it for the Lord."

KEY – This man had higher expectations of his fence than he had of HIMSELF. This is NOT the attitude that DISCIPLES of Jesus Christ are to possess. This is NOT how DISCIPLES of Christ are called to operate and live.

TRANSITIONS

NOTE – Let's address a few areas (3) where we must adjust expectations of ourselves:

EXPECTATIONS PT. 1

Too many Christians expect too little of themselves when it comes to their THOUGHTS/HEART...

- 1) We are too tolerant of sinful meditations and thought patterns
- 2) We are lax in maintaining a God-honoring/centered thought-life

NOTE – The Bible places a tremendous premium upon what takes place WITHIN our hearts and minds. Thus, we are called to take MASTERY/DOMINION over such things! Consider:

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

23 Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.

Q. Why does the Bible warn against a sinful/lax thought life? Consider the following quote:

Many fail to hold themselves responsible for the character of their thoughts, seeing them as unreal or fanciful, not taking them seriously. But our thoughts do affect our character.

Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, famous for its splendid masonry of solid rock, is the result of nature's slow, silent process. The steady dripping of water from the cavern's roof forms enormous pillars. One drop of water, falling from the ceiling, deposits its sediment. Others follow, each drop adding its contribution until the icicle of stone begins to grow, ultimately reaching the rock beneath, becoming a massive pillar.

Each of our hearts displays a similar process. A thought may stir only momentarily, but sink into the soul, unconsciously making its deposit. Other thoughts follow, forming habits of thought, erecting within us monuments of purpose or pillars of abomination. Our characters are affected forever, being made of petrified thoughts.

A. What we think upon impacts who we are and what we do (good, bad and ugly)!

KEY – Far too many of us traffic in thoughts/meditations that GRIEVE the Lord. i.e., We willfully entertain thoughts that are contrary to what He would call us to dwell on. Time will NOT permit me to cover them all, but consider HOW OFTEN the Word cautions us against worry, fear, doubt, self-glorification (i.e., thinking too highly of yourself), self-negation/loathing (thinking too little of yourself), magnifying your enemies/obstacles; diminishing the Lord, lust, envy, etc, BUT THESE ARE THE EXACT THINGS THAT WE DWELL UPON/consider...

And rather than rise up and say, "NO, I am NOT going to let my mind dwell upon such things!" we tolerate it; we allow the enemy to amplify it; we reject biblical admonition and we suffer acc.

KEY – You have DOMINION over your mind. You can CHOOSE you dwell and meditate upon. In fact, Scripture speaks often to what you should focus upon in the inner man. Consider:

Joshua 1:7–9 (NIV)

7 “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Colossians 3:1–4 (NIV)

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

KEY – It is time to STOP tolerating/excusing our sinful thoughts. It is time to DEMAND and EXPECT MORE of ourselves regarding our thought-lives, that we might honor the Lord!

Q. As we enter 2019, what meditations of the heart/patterns of thinking need to go? Changes?

EXPECTATIONS PT. 2

Too many Christians expect too little of themselves when it comes to their WORDS...

- 1) We are too tolerant of sinful words and manners of speaking
- 2) We are quite lax in utilizing our words in a God-honoring manner

KEY – Far too many of us traffic in words/manners of speaking that GRIEVE the Lord.

1) We tolerate/make excuses for our lies (despite the command of the Word)

Ephesians 4:25 (NIV)

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

2) We tolerate/make excuses for unwholesome language (you pray to God w/ that mouth?)

Ephesians 4:29a (NIV)

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths,

3) We tolerate/make excuses for words that are discouraging and harmful (not our calling)

Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

NOTE – Never underestimate the power of your words to harm or to heal; build up or tear down:

Proverbs 18:21

21 The tongue has the power of life and death,
and those who love it will eat its fruit.

4) We tolerate/make excuses for the manner in which we speak of people (say it's not so)

James 3:9–12 (NIV)

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

5) We tolerate/make excuses for words that speak more to your fears than your faith (more to your obstacles v. the Lord)

Numbers 13:26–33; 14:1–10 (NIV)

26 They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 They gave Moses this account: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. 28 But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.”

30 Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.”

31 But the men who had gone up with him said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.” 32 And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. 33 We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”

1 That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. 2 All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! 3 Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” 4 And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. 6 Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes 7 and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. 8 If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. 9 Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.”

10 But the whole assembly talked about stoning them.

KEY – It is time to STOP tolerating/excusing sinful words. It is time to DEMAND and EXPECT MORE of ourselves regarding what proceeds from our mouths, that we might honor the Lord!

Q. As we enter 2019, what words need to go? What changes must be made?

EXPECTATIONS PT. 3

Too many Christians expect too little of themselves when it comes to their LIFESTYLES...

- 1) We are too tolerant of sinful behaviors and activities
- 2) We are lax in surrendering our lives to the purposes of God

KEY – Far too many of us traffic in actions and behaviors that GRIEVE the Lord (even in the church)

NOTE 1 – The Church of Jesus Christ—though living in vital union with Him—is to be CHARACTERIZED by the FRUIT of the Holy Spirit: i.e., love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control (cf. Gal. 5:22 –23). The best EVIDENCE of a genuine/living faith IS WHAT YOU DO! (cf. James 2)

NOTE 2 – HOWEVER, all too often our lives are characterized by WORLDLINESS, carnality and sinful desires. We are given to the acts of the flesh, which Paul characterized in the following way:

Galatians 5:19–21 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. **I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

1 John 2:15–17 (NIV)

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father[a] is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

We are called to embrace a HIGHER standard of living! We're NO longer to act as we once did!

Colossians 3:1–10, 12–14

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

12 . . . as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

KEY – It is time to STOP tolerating/excusing sinful behaviors. It is time to DEMAND and EXPECT MORE of ourselves regarding how we live, that we might honor the Lord!

Q. As we enter 2019, what activities/habits, etc. need to be cast aside? What needs to change?

CONCLUSIONS

KEY – “My people suffer from low expectations of Me, what life can be in Me, AND FROM LOW EXPECTATIONS OF THEMSELVES” (REPEAT).

Q. What if we expected more OF OURSELVES in Christ?

Q. What if we stopped settling in our words, thoughts and deeds?

Q. What if we embraced a higher standard in Christian life and service?

Q. CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT THE LORD COULD DO FOR, IN AND THROUGH SUCH A PEOPLE?