

For Sale—A New Year

January 2022 — You just spent another year of your life. What did you get for it? Character? Are you more like Jesus? Spiritual growth? Do you feel you have a better understanding of both God and yourself? More money in the bank? Are you on target for your retirement plan? What is the condition of your heavenly bank account?

We don't have to be 90 to die. Just check the local newspaper for the ages of those who are dying every day. Where do you want to be 365 days from now? Are your choices matching your real desires? Consider this — We all have a "For Sale" sign in our life. What in your life...is for sale? What in your life...is not for sale?

Matthew 13:44 -46 **"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it."**

Do you see a picture here? Let's make it more practical and call the arrangement a trade. Many decisions involve a trade-off. Life is largely made up of trade-offs. If we want an education we must trade a few years of our life for study and learning. If we want a new and larger home we must save and prepare for higher demands on our budget. If we want a happy marriage we must be willing to trade our time, attention, and kindness to our spouse even when we don't "feel" like it.

Much of life is a lot like bartering. In the scriptures it is clear that commitment to God means giving him all of the rights to ourselves, learning his ways, training oneself to be sensitive to his promptings — a prompting that requires a mere "Yes!" or "No!" — along with a willingness to exchange some impulses for disciplines. Can you see how life has many trade-offs?

In my on and off, work and college years, I was caught in the military draft in 1959. Being a part of the Army, or any military unit, you quickly come to realize that you have given up your right to yourself. Several unusual people, who seemed very unfriendly, are now in charge of you — your entire day 24/7 — what you wear, how you talk, when you eat, and what you think. They have you, lock, stock, and barrel (an old saying that means "everything" as it relates to the pieces of a gun. Actually, they own that too). Well, it doesn't take long to understand that only by doing things their way are you going to have any kind of peace, value, acceptance, and significance. There is a clear trade-off.

Matthew 16:24 **Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."**

What is our cross? Very simply — **Our cross is doing the will of God.**¹

This would be a good time to recall some of the song that nearly everyone reading this has sung at one time or another — *Onward Christian Soldiers*. A great old song with phrases like, "Marching as to war..." and "Forward into battle..." and "Like a mighty army..." and "With the cross of Jesus..."

Sorry, but I don't see too many people like that in many of today's churches. Yet, as I read and study God's word, there is no question, we believers are at war with the world, the flesh, and the devil — all at work to distance us from the battle that rages in the nations of the world and in the minds of God's people. It's a clever and devious battle that is waged every hour of every day. And doing the will of God requires training, pursuing faith, love, and perseverance.

1 Timothy 4:7 **Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.**

1 Timothy 4:8 **...training for godliness offers much better benefits in this life and in the life to come.**

1 Timothy 6:11 **Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.**

Note: It will cost you!

And in the last days, which we are clearly in, we must note a challenge to the church. Revelation 3:14-15 **Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's new creation: I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other!**

Revelation 3:17-18 (select) **You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want.... I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me.... and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see.**

Gold that is refined in a fire represents, in this usage, giving up the impurities in our life for the purity of God's life and ways. The white garments referred to are coverings for our nakedness. Ray Stedman wrote, **Everyone is morally naked before God.**² Both examples have to do with a discipline of purity in our mind, emotions, and choices. Regarding riches, which are often given to us by God, we must not lose sight of the fact that our riches laid up in Heaven won't be touched when the stock market crashes....in the end it will happen in 1 hour.³

2 Peter 1:4-7 **And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.**

The question now is.... are we living like we believe all of the above verses? Looking deeper, can you begin to see that all of it has a cost. God very often asks us to give up something good, for something better.

So, how do we apply it? It's a fact that God has a plan to shower us with blessings in the new year that is right now our personal future.

If you know your creator and trust Him, you don't have to worry about your life. Your faith and reliance on him is, in fact, your security, peace, acceptance, and assurance of eternity with him.

What are you willing to trade in the year ahead? The Bible is full of great trade-offs, bullish investments, and maximum exchanges.

Here are just a few of the trades you can make this year:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| • <i>honor your father & mother</i> | • <i>give to spreading the gospel</i> |
| • <i>live at peace with one another</i> | • <i>marry a believer</i> |
| • <i>wives submit</i> | • <i>husbands love</i> |
| • <i>pray for your enemies</i> | • <i>bless them that curse you</i> |
| • <i>pray for those who use you</i> | • <i>pray for Israel</i> |

- *guard your mouth*
- *don't be a nagging spouse*
- *show mercy to others*
- *stop quarreling*
- *stop judging of others*
- *love your neighbor*
- *no more white lies*
- *no more gossiping*
- *think before you speak*
- *don't boast about tomorrow*

Each one will cost us something. We reap what we sow!⁴ So, get wisdom, the most valuable commodity.⁵

God is waiting to make the trade. Are you?

1 Oswald Chambers / *Utmost For His Highest*

2 Ray Stedman / *God's Final Word*

3 Revelation 18 MSG

4 Galatians 6:7 NKJV

5 Proverbs 4:7, TPT