Dear Open Door Family,

Tuesday - Stan Derksen and I drove to Chicago and took part in Will Peycke's ordination council. It was great to see Will and meet the pastor and staff where he ministers. It was a joy to listen to him field questions and answer from the depth of his study and experience. He was approved unanimously by the council and will be ordained this coming Sunday at Parker Road Bible Church. I'd like to share this New Years challenge by Woody Roland, director of I Teams South America.

Psalms 35:27 (ESV) Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, "Great is the Lord, who delights in the welfare of his servant!"

At the beginning of a new decade (and having listened to several "informed" opinions about our prospects for 2010) I must admit that I have evolved into a pessimistic optimist. In fact, I have become such a pessimistic optimist that I would be tempted to call myself an optimistic pessimist if it were not for remembering the words of President Harry Truman. He once said, "A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties." In the end, while recognizing there will be some real challenges in the coming year, I would rather not make difficulties of the opportunities that God opens before us.

Of course, we need both optimists and pessimists. The Wright brothers had to be some type of optimists to think their plane could fly, but Gleb Kotelnikov proved himself to be a bit of a pessimist when he invented the modern backpack-style parachute. My guess is that most of today's fighter pilots are thankful for both the Wrights and Mr. Kotelnikov.

In regards to health, I believe that God still heals our physical maladies. At the same time, I am convinced that I will go to my own death as bald as my Grandpa Roland. I believe that God desires to bless us as His people. However, His blessings are rarely defined by our standards.

In 2 Chronicles 16:9 Hanani stated, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him." Hanani believed that (and it remains true), but King Asa still put him in prison for saying it. The Lord delights in giving support to those who follow after Him - but sometimes the strength or support He gives are found in challenging circumstances.

In **Psalm 35:27** David wrote, "Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, 'Great is the LORD, who delights in the welfare of his servant!" (ESV) With no apparent doubt, David could say, "God is glad when all goes well for His servant." However, in the context of the whole Psalm, we can see that David was dealing with the deep betrayal of someone for whom he cared very much.

There is no getting around the fact that part of our faith experience as Christians is believing that God enjoys blessing His people. It is part of the very "who He is." John Piper wrote, "God's omnipotent exuberance to do us good is one of the most freeing discoveries a human can make." I believe that - and also enjoy saying the phrase "omnipotent exuberance" out loud. I also believe the truth of **Psalm 23:6** "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me [or, literally "pursue me"] all the days of my life" - even when that goodness and mercy must follow me into "the valley of the shadow of death."

A pessimist sees a step forward and a step backward as lost time. An optimist sees it as the beginning of a dance. At the beginning of a new decade we would do well to remember that "[in] life as in dance: Grace glides on blistered feet." (Alice Abrams)

Pastor Mark Kieft
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