

## **Preaching my way into 2016**

As we leave 2015, we must look back and take a good look at what the year brought us. We rejoiced in the birth of new life and celebrated the many years God gave us. We rejoiced in new union of marriage and future families. As a church, we celebrated 40 years since our conception. No one ever dreamed that these friendships would have lasted so long. We have seen many prayers answered, lives touched, people delivered and miracles because **God is Good!**

But we also said goodbye to friends and loved ones. We mourned the passing of both old and young. Some of us experienced separations, disappointments, tragedy. Several of us still travail through sickness-but we see God's grace and mercy in every situation.

As we enter the uncertain future that is 2016, we must stay rooted in what we know is true-the **Word of God!** It has been and will be our guidebook. So let me take you to the word. (Back to Basics)...

### **Romans 12:1(KJV)**

**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.**

There will always be challenges to our life and faith in God in Christ. We will see them more and more in the coming year. But, first stand firm in your personal commitment to your God and Savior.

### **Romans 12:2 (KJV)**

**2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

That is when our opinion, views, attitudes and thoughts develop to a higher level-both spiritually and naturally. Paul's further writings to the Romans in this chapter are good reminders of how we should live in the coming year. I want to point out a few from Chapter 12 (NIV)

### **Romans 12:9-14,18**

## **9 “Love must be sincere”**

You can only fake love for so long. Get to know and understand those around you. Then you can see beyond too obvious to love the person that is beneath. Spend time with each other and the close connection of love will be established.

## **10 “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.”**

When you are devoted/committed to someone, you work harder to maintain relationships and work out differences. You do not walk w\away easily. By placing the other person in a higher honor, you will treat them with utmost respect. If you can treat the president or first lady with respect, you can do the same for those you see every day.

## **11- “Never be lacking in zeal”**

The satisfaction you get out depends on what you put in. Your joy, zeal, enthusiasm comes from within you. The song should be inside of you. If things are “dead”, lack zeal, don’t look around you. Look inside of you. You need to stir up the joy for yourself. No one can give you joy- it comes from within. Find what makes you happy in God and do it!

## **12-“Be joyful in hope”**

Hope is what keeps us alive. Without it we die inside and out.

### **“Patient in affliction”**

All of us will go through hardships. But remember, nothing lasts forever. Things will change.

### **“Faithful in prayer”**

Pray when you feel like it and when you don’t. God hears prayers.

## **13 “Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”**

No matter how little you have, someone has less. No matter how tight things are, someone is even tighter. Open up to share a little with others as the widow who made a cake for prophet, Elijah

(1 Kings 17:10-16). You may be surprised by the blessing to you both. Think about others.

#### **14 “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse”**

These people need a blessing. If they are persecuting or mistreating others, it is because things are not going well with them. They need you to put a blessing on their life.

#### **18 “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone”**

We can change the environment around us. It may not happen automatically, but it can happen. It is hard to keep fighting if no one is fighting back. Practice living in peace. It will be good for you and others.

This is just a small portion of what God gives us to help us on our life’s journey. God has made us a body, fitly joined together. We need each other for all of us to grow, be happy and thrive (not just survive). As 2016 comes, God has provided us another opportunity to experience and share His love. There are endless possibilities-the choice is ours.

Be Blessed Rev. Stokes