

## “Still the Same”

**Acts 22:1-11, Galatians 1:14**

1/2/22 Epicenter / BAC

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All other things being equal, the dollar value of an Impala is never going to come close to the dollar value of a Corvette. They are different vehicles – and there’s nothing wrong with that. People are different, too, and each one of us has been created exactly as he or she is supposed to have been created.

New Year’s resolutions always seem to focus on something new, rather than on something already there. But remember that God has created you according to His own set of specifications. Like a computer, every once in a while, sure - maybe you need to get an upgrade or update, but you don’t have to change everything in order to impact the world around you.

Some of the people who followed Jesus early on included Peter – Outspoken, impulsive, instinctive; Paul – Passionate, committed, outgoing; John – Kind, loving, fiercely loyal; Luke – Precise, meticulous, detailed. Those characteristics largely remained intact after they began to follow Jesus.

**God is not trying to do a complete remanufacture.** Peter was quick to follow or to speak up; Paul was passionate and zealous in his defense and spread of the gospel message; John is known as “the disciple that Jesus loved;” Luke was detailed and specific in researching the facts about Jesus so he could present an accurate account of His life. These four men wrote at least 22 of the 27 books of the New Testament. God *may* bless you with a rebuild or restoration, but He’s not looking to remanufacture you into someone or something that you simply are not before He can use you to impact the kingdom.

**God has created you according to a specific plan for a specific purpose.** Isaiah 64:8 says, “**But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.**” God had a specific plan for you when He created you. He created you just as you are, right here and right now. You have a unique set of gifts and opportunities that are perfect for this moment in time and space because of who and when and where God created you, and He has set you up for success perfectly. Paul writes (Ephesians 2:10) “**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**”

**God’s not into reprogramming robots. Rather,** He redeems the best of who you are. David was brave and loyal; Abraham was wise and dedicated; Moses was conscientious and humble. And each of them was used in mighty ways when they rose up to the opportunities God had for them. What will you do when you step up to the opportunities God has designed for you? How will you impact the kingdom of heaven in 2022 by bringing the best of who you are, and offering it in service to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

**God expects you to remain in-service.** God isn’t looking for a bunch of busybodies, running around all the time but going nowhere. It is not sufficient to just be doing something; *what* you are doing is important, too, and if you’re doing that you firmly believe is right based on incorrect information or on an incorrect understanding of the information, you may be doing more harm than good! Indeed, Paul describes how he was following the course that he thought was right, saying [Gal. 1:14] “**I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.**” In Acts 7, we see that Paul supervised the execution of Stephen. He simply believed he was doing the right thing. Likewise, Al Capone, a gangster and crime boss in Chicago in the late 1920’s and early 1930’s, is quoted as

saying, “I have spent the best years of my life giving people the lighter pleasures, helping them have a good time, and all I get is abuse, the existence of a hunted man.”

God wants you to be serving well, not just staying busy. If you’re busily serving based on incorrect information or an incorrect understanding of the correct information, you may be doing more harm than good. Study the Scriptures – God’s Word is the guide for life. Be with the body – there is blessing and growth that can only happen in community with fellow believers. Talk to the teacher – God isn’t giving you the silent treatment; He wants you to hear Him, but you’ve got to be quiet long enough so you can learn to recognize His voice.

***There are no salvage yards in God’s kingdom plan.*** God thought you were worth saving; do you think God is worth serving? If so, what minor changes do you need to allow God to make in your life, so that you will be more fully fit to serve the Master? Are you willing to submit to God’s refining process in your life? Surely, **God seeks to refine those whom He loves (Malachi 3:3-4).** The purpose of a refining process is to remove impurities or unwanted materials from something, such as crude oil or sugar.

Maybe as we now turn the corner of a new year, that’s what you really need. Not a complete makeover or remanufacturing, but a refining – a tweaking. So often, New years resolutions focus on changing something about yourself. But God is focusing on the best of who you are, saying, “Bring that . . . and together, we’ll impact eternity!”

### **Three suggestions on having a greater impact in 2022:**

#### ***Find your strengths***

- What do people ask you about yourself? What do they see in you?
- What do people ask you to do? How do they ask you to help or serve?
  - What are you passionate about? What bothers you when you see it on the news or hear about it? Where and how are you most inclined to ‘jump in’ and help?
- God’s not confused about your strengths; He created them in you. But sometimes YOU need a little clarification. So give some thought to what your strengths are, and what they are there for.

#### ***Walk in worship***

- **“God loves a cheerful giver”** [2 Corinthians 9:7] Could the same be said for the giving of authentic heart worship? Could God really just want a people for Himself who will be eager to worship and please Him, not because they have to or because it’s expected of them, but because they genuinely want to? Would God be more honored by the sincere worship of the few than He would be by the robotic worship of the masses? Might this be what’s missing from your having a spiritual walk that makes you more and more like Jesus? How will you address this ***right now?***

#### ***Don’t tell your story – tell God’s story in you***

- You have a story to tell; a story that can speak truth, life, and hope into the lives of others around you - Like Paul, who invested in Timothy and helped him along his spiritual journey. You have wisdom and experience, both good and bad, that can help others.

Sometimes, that story seems like it is all about how God has changed you. But maybe it’s time to think about how God has NOT changed you. Maybe it’s time to start thinking about how God has wired (and rewired) you. Don’t focus so much right now on what you think needs to change, or what you think should be different. Instead, ask yourself, “What about me is still the same? Why did God create me this way? How can I use my unique design and opportunities to impact the kingdom of heaven and the lives of those around me in 2022?”