

## “Fourteen Years”

By Doug Hamilton

This morning’s lesson shall be a different one than you are used to. Nonetheless it shall be a very applicable one. It is titled “Fourteen Years”

### A) A Fourteen Year Reference to Past Events

The Apostle Paul made reference to two events in his life which mention a fourteen year interval. The first was in relation to an account Paul wrote about in *Galatians 2:1*, “*Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.*” This is in relation to fourteen years from Saul’s conversion, which was in A.D. 33. The event to which Paul refers to is his second return to Jerusalem in Acts 11:29 which took place in A.D. 44. This is a fourteen reference to events of the past.

### B) A Fourteen Year Reference to the Vision of the Future

The second passage is in reference to a vision of the future of Paul. *2 Corinthians 12:2*, “*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.*” If the letter to the Corinthians was likely written in 56 AD, then this event to which Paul refers to would have occurred about A.D. 40. Paul had a vision from God to which he was caught up to heaven. Paul had a severe weakness, “a thorn in the flesh”, which was humbling him (11:7).

Some say it was his anti-Christian behavior of the past which haunted him on the mission field. Others say a plausible explanation is a weakness in his eyes. He wrote to the Galatian Christians in *Galatians 4:15*, “*if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.*” He also made reference to this type of writing style as well. *Galatians 6:11*, “*See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.*” We don’t know it for sure, but we do know that God answered the request for removal for the future. That answer was NO. The weakness would be left to keep him humble. This was a fourteen year vision for the future.

### C) A Fourteen Year Reference to the Past and a Vision for the Future

I am have officially ended my fourteenth year at Camp Hill Church of Christ today, August 14, 2016. Like Paul, there is must we can review about our past in the last fourteen years. There is also an aspect of some things we need to discuss concerning our vision for the future. Let’s start a review of the past and a vision for the future.

#### A Fourteen Year Past of Camp Hill Through the Eyes of a Preacher

It was Wednesday August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2002 when we arrived with the moving truck after making the 1,022 mile trip from Osceola, Iowa. In tow was a wife, four children and a cat named Jessie. My oldest child was 16 all the way down to Abbie, who was 6 years old. Jesse was two. We parked the movie van in front of the rental home and drove the van to the church building. Some of the many members of the congregation were there to assist us to unload the truck following the classes. Men like Ron Kemp, Bob Williams, Lance Decker, Justin Wetzels, Brian and Josh Dowler, Tony Terrace and Barry Fogal were there to assist. It took only about one hour to unload with all the help from the brethren. My back and my family were very happy to receive the helpful welcome.

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### The Leadership:

At the time the Camp Hill church had four elders, Bob Williams, Wally Evans, Barry Fogal and Alan Garner. We also had nine deacons and two semi-retired preachers, Paul Cantrell and Randolph Pritchett. There were about 145 members in the group, including about 20 high schoolers. On my first Sunday I began a series of lessons covering the afterlife and there was a potluck following the service.

### The Congregation:

What was our initial observation? It was obvious that the congregation was full of encouragers servants in their giftedness. Some of these standouts were Bob and Beth Williams, Wally and Grace Evans, Sue Smith, Jennifer Crowden, Cathy Dowler, Nita Hammersmith, Lance and Tammy Decker, Ron and Sue Kemp, Russell Pierce, Jay Corbett, Karen Dipofi and Ann Bower to just name a few. There was so much food, so many smiles and such great laughter that it was obvious of your strengths. Jesus said in *John 13:34-35*, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*”<sup>35</sup> “*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” You were and always have been this type of congregation to me.

This congregation had many men and women who are willing to teach. At one point early on Paul Cantrell showed me a list of forty individuals who said they would be willing to teach a class at some level. That is an incredible amount of teachers for a congregation of less than 150 people.

Today, of the original group of 150, seventy-five percent have graduated, moved on or passed away. Even through all that, the Lord blessed us with so many new families, new converts and restorations. Over the years we have bumped over 200 average attendance many times, only the drift back to the 180s.

### Youth Group:

The youth group was huge with twenty high schoolers, and about 25 more for the pre-high school. Grant Deitch and Larry Mackey were heavily involved in that area of education. This was one of the reasons Jana and I chose to come here, for we wanted our children to be part of this incredible group and participate in the many activities which were planned. It wasn't long before a group of parents asked if I would teach the Spiritual Giftedness class for them. This was one of the most fun classes I have ever taught. The Mid-South tour which exposed our students to We loved both the Bible Camps for the children and the game nights at the Smith mansion for the young men. You have hosted the Bible Bowl for more than three decades. Now the big thing is the wonderful program of Lads to Leaders. Most of these are living in other locations of the country now. In the last fourteen years we have graduated more than one hundred students.

### Missions:

You had a few ministries besides the youth. Randy Pritchett was holding the prison ministry. Patti Williams, Sue Smith, Margaret Pownell and Lisa McGarvey were utilizing the deaf ministry for Steve and Jenean Radczenko. Bob and Beth Williams, Don Pownell and Ivan were involved in Ghanaian missions. Jay Corbett was involved in India mission. Bob Williams

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personally introduced me to the work in Ghana. Since then we have had members make many other mission trips to these and other areas of the world. Both Bob Williams and Jay Corbett pulled me into Ghana and India respectively.

### Ministries:

In the past fourteen years there have been many other ministries added to the tool box for the church family.

- Car Repair Ministry: This ministry focuses on the repair of the members vehicles at a substantially reduced rate of what would normally be charges. It also helped train many others on how to work on their own vehicles. It has saved the congregation hundreds of thousands of dollars over the last decade.
- Golden Living Ministry: As a congregation we adopted the local nursing home Golden Living on Poplar Street in Camp Hill. This has changed the daily lives of many elderly of our community. We completely have redone the patio of the Alzheimer’s section, sponsored the Christmas gifts for the last four years and hosted live streamed worship every Sunday. Every Thursday we have 20 to 30 residents attend the weekly Bible study.
- Internet Ministry: We have developed one of the finest Internet Ministries in the brotherhood. This ministry serves man every week and has resulted in the conversion of many.
- Biblical Eating Ministry: This ran for three years and helped people lose tons of weight while drawing closer to God. When we initially did this, we had anywhere from 40-70 participants from our congregation and the general public in each class. Some of the classes lost over 1500 pounds in an 8 week session. We are going to have this course offered again in the near future, so I hope you attend and invite your friends.
- Small-group home Bible Studies: This has led to many dozens of converts and strengthened countless over the last fourteen years.
- Meals Ministry: I have never seen a congregation better at providing meals for families in need. They say the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach. If that is true of a congregation, then you have the heart of many.
- God’s Love Story: This was an incredible undertaking. With the help of many dozens of individuals from the congregation, we published a forty week Bible program which is now available to all in the brotherhood.
- Other Ministries: There are also many other ministries, some which have come and gone in that time. The soup ministry, the computer ministry, the Tea ministry for the elderly, a greeting ministry, VBS and others. We are a congregation which enjoys being busy for the Lord in the kingdom.

From a preacher’s point of view, you are an encouraging and active congregation in the kingdom, willing to make a difference for the world around us. As Jesus said in Matthew 25, *“Well done thy good and faithful servants.”*

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### Fourteen Years and a Vision for the Future

Seeing where we have been and where we are, let us now discuss a vision for the future. As a preacher, I have a vision on my heart. I did not have to go to the “third heaven” to gain it, but simply to the pages of the same Bible which you all have. The vision is not one of a miraculous nature, but of a biblical nature. There are some very important points to the vision of a congregation.

#### 1) It is an Evangelistic Vision

We are to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world (Mark 16:15-16). We have the potential to “turn the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) for the cause of Christ regardless of where we are (Acts 1:8). As a church family the goal has been defined by Jesus and together we can have a mind to work (Nehemiah 4:6). The church of Jesus Christ is meant to have a vision of being evangelistically minded.

#### 2) It is a Retentive Vision

Not only are we supposed to be evangelistic, but also to teach converts whatsoever Jesus commands of us (Matthew 28:19-20). With this teaching we grow in respect to salvation (1 Peter 2:2), develop leadership (1 Timothy 2:2) and provide longevity for the present generation of Christians (Hebrews 2:1-2). We must hang onto the souls who convert.

This has and always will be the vision of Christ’s church. We either share this vision in our commission with Christ or not. That leads to a very important question. How can we know that we a Camp Hill really share this vision with Jesus? Since a vision is that of the future, the only evidence we would have of this is the plans and goals for the future. It is in Camp Hill’s master plan that we can overcome obstacles and make it possible to attain it. That leads to the biggest question of all:

What is the current plan to fulfill the great commission vision of Jesus in the church at Camp Hill?

I will be gone for the next two Sundays I will be traveling. On the morning of September 4<sup>th</sup> I would like to unveil a Preacher’s Vision to carry out the Great Commission of Christ in Camp Hill. I hope and pray you will consider this. Until that time, be praying every day about the seriousness of this topic and its relevance to Camp Hill. Let us be in a position to look back fourteen years from now with the greatest of joy, knowing that we have fought the good fight of faith.