



A CHALLENGE FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD ROMANIAN TERRITORY IN 2014

I was challenged recently when I read Pastor Anthony Velasco's message to the Church of God pastors and leader in the Philippines. Serving as the pastor of a 10,000+ member church, as well as the National Overseer of the Church of God in the Philippines, he is leading the Church of God into the unknown territory. His challenge to them is the same challenge I want to present to the Romanian churches here in the United States. I've adapted it a bit, but believe that it is a message that will resonate and if taken seriously can take us to a new level of ministry as we endeavor to move forward together.

When a challenge is presented to us—a challenge that will level up our skills, a challenge to journey into the unknown, a challenge to break our daily routine and do something new, a challenge to do something Bigger and Better, how do we take it?

As I observe people in general, I notice that most of us are not willing to take new challenges. We wouldn't dare to make a bold step; we hesitate; we prefer to step aside and offer the opportunity to others in a silver platter. With a drop of a hat, we utter these words:

“That's impossible!”

“It has never been done before!”

“We've never done it like that before!”

“It's too risky!”

“Are you crazy?!”

“We prefer the status quo!”

These are just some of the reasons I hear from people who don't want to venture out of their comfort zone. Most of us don't want to accept the challenge to take a risk. We prefer the “tried and tested” past versus the “risky and failure-prone” new. In other words, people are afraid to fail, and who can blame them?

But before you decide to stay forever in the “Tried and Tested past” department, consider these:

1. Aviation History. Kite flying in China dates back to several hundred years BC and is thought to be the earliest example of man-made flight. Some kites were capable of carrying a man into the air. *(I thank God this is not the way we fly today.)*
2. Tools for writing history. Early writings were in caves using sharp objects. Later on, clay was discovered and made writing portable. *(Aren't we thankful that nothing stopped our ancestors from their milestone discovery.)*
3. Toothpaste history. Early Greeks and Romans used crushed oyster shells and bones in toothpaste. *(Aren't we thankful that William Colgate took the risk of selling good tasting toothpaste!)*

Our forefathers didn't accept the status quo. They took the challenge to make things better and in so doing, they encountered lots of failure. Those failures didn't discourage them but their failures in fact pushed them to their limits until success was achieved. And who is benefiting from their harshly-criticized-time-consuming-and-infamous-effort? Two letter word—US!

Acts 20:24 reminds us:

But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.

I don't have to survive. I've been given an assignment. As a follower of Jesus I serve God in an assigned role, and Who I serve and the message I tell is what must (and will!) survive. Me...I'm just a messenger, a servant, a vessel and I don't have to survive. That frees me up to try the untried. Do what's never been done before. Touch the untouchable and reach the unreachable!

Philippians 4:13 (NKJV) is my favorite passage of scripture, my life verse:
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

With this in mind, I think this year is the year when we need to change our attitude from being passive to active... from "accepting the status quo" to "being willing to take a blow"...and into stepping up to the challenges of life and eagerly wanting to make that holy move and ***MAKE THINGS HAPPEN*** for Christ. In fact, that would be an excellent theme for this year: ***MAKE THINGS HAPPEN!*** Jesus is all about making things happen. He demonstrated that while living on the earth. Then, when He ascended, He said that He would send the Holy Spirit, who would endue us with POWER! Power for what? Power to make a difference. Power to live the abundant life. Power to commit to our calling. Power to overcome the force of the enemy. Power to live holy. Power to witness and testify of His greatness.

I am burdened for the youth of the Romanian church. I am concerned that we must do everything we can to reach and teach and disciple them. We must acknowledge their gifts and callings! We must give them permission to do things a different way. We must be a bit more flexible, without compromising the Word of God or holiness. And at the same time, we must understand what that means. It's all about Jesus. It's not about tradition or legalism. It's about Jesus who came that we might have life and life more abundantly!

Please take note- your holy courageous move today will benefit the church of tomorrow. Your now moment is preparing you for your next moment.

What's your next move, my friend?

I'm praying for you!

Dr. Tony P. Lane, Administrative Bishop
Church of God Romanian Territory