



The Country Preacher's Newsletter

"...speaking the truth in love" Ephesians 4:15

Greeting The New Year

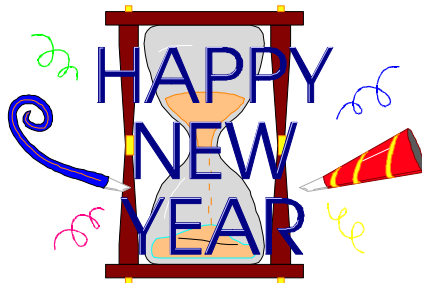
By Randall F. Matheny

How one greets the new year is affected to a large degree by how one departs the old one. Circumstances and attitudes rarely change overnight. Consequently, because this is recognized, we tend to hear a lot about "resolutions" at this time of year. According to the dictionary, a resolution in this sense is "a resolve or determination; *to make a firm resolution to do something.* The act of resolving or determining, as upon an action or course of action." The verb form is "resolve," which means, "To fix or settle on by deliberate choice and will; determine to do something." Jokes are made of resolutions rarely kept, or later redefined as "good intentions," making them no more than wishful thinking. This is probably the natural fruit of an intellect that examines itself no more than once a year. It is not taken seriously by anyone. Many people who have had a twinge of conscience have resolved to no longer make resolutions, because they believe that this is the one resolution that they can keep.

The Christian must never fall into the trap of an "annual examination," or that of a failure to

make any examination at all. If we want to really make a difference in our lives and the lives of others, we must be on our toes daily to examine ourselves (2 Cor. 13:5), to readjust faulty schedules "redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5), to realign confused priorities (Mat. 6:33; Lk. 9:23), to replace "stinking thinking" with the sweet word of God (Lk. 6:45; Psm. 119:11),

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and to set reasonable and worthwhile goals (Phil. 3:13-14; Col. 3:1-3; 2 Jn. 8), considering ourselves and others as we endeavor to walk worthy of the calling with which we were called, "with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3). Whereas most worldly thoughts tend to turn to "self," the Christian has a greater

and more noble consideration: The Lord and His body, the church, over which He is Head, and for which He shed His blood (Col. 1:18; Acts 20:28). This highest of priorities gives food for thought. Let us daily set a deliberate course of action which includes the following: 1. To grow spiritually, be more available for the Lord's service and be faithful to the Lord in each regularly scheduled assembly of His body. Out of the 8760 hours in every year, we assemble for so few (about 208) that it seems a pitifully small thing for any of us to do, and a grievous disdain of the Lord to shun His presence for such a short time. 2. To be supportive of the work of the church. We, together, make up the church and it is strong or weak, sound or unsound, faithful or unfaithful, as a result of what we all are. 3. To learn from past mistakes and correct the weaknesses that they revealed, or we will forever remain victims of our own follies and set future generations on the same course. We can each have a great new year and a wonderful life of love and service, if we really want them.

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Ask For The "Old Paths" In The New Year

By Randall F. Matheny

Long ago Jehovah spoke through the prophet Jeremiah saying, "Thus says the LORD: Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk in it" (Jer. 6:16). Although the righteous, those who are planted in the house of the Lord, will always be fresh and flourishing (Psm. 92:12-14), they way by which they are to walk is as old as the eternal purpose within which it is rooted (Eph. 3:11). The intended message is that the Lord has a way for humankind that is better than any other way, or any combination of other ways, that the world may present.

The identical theme is repeated in the New Testament, which is the law under which Christians serve and worship (Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2), thus making the New Testament of Jesus Christ the "old paths" by which we walk today. The Christian is commanded, "... not to think beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6); "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17); "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them..." (1 Tim. 4:16); "...let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind" (Phil. 3:16); "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 Jn. 5:2-3).

Some Jews of Berea were more fair-minded than others "...in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily..." (Acts 17:11). Jesus appealed to the "old paths" as defense against temptation (Mat. 4:3-11) and as the source for spiritual instruction (Lk. 10:26). Paul appealed to the same as the basis for his faith and his preaching (2 Cor. 4:13).

So, the "old paths" are our guide for life, our source for spiritual and moral instruction, the source of authority which must be consulted for all that is done in terms of life, service and worship; they are the rule by which we walk, and the means by which, in the keeping of, we express our love to God. We must always remember though, that eternal life is not to be found in the written word apart from the Savior who is the word incarnate (Jn. 1:14), and about whom the word testifies (Jn. 5:39). Eternal life will always be in the Son (1 Jn. 2:24-25), but we would know nothing of the Son, of eternal life, or how to obtain it without the word (Jn. 20:30-31).

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Tidbits

"Your family and your love must be cultivated like a garden. Time, effort, and imagination must be summoned constantly to keep any relationship flourishing and growing." -- **Jim Rohn**

"What a father says to his children is not heard by the

world; but it will be heard by posterity." -- **Jean Paul Richter**

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