

“THE NEW YEAR”

“New Year’s Resolutions”

Scripture Reading – Philippians, 3:7-14

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

‘Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.’

Hebrews, 10:22, NIV

Congratulations! You have almost made it through another year!

And tomorrow we are embarking on 2007, a new year full of possibility and opportunity, a new year full of happiness and heartache. To give you some idea of what lies ahead, there are 12 months... 52 weeks... 365 days... 8,760 hours... 525,600 minutes... and 31,536,000 seconds. *What will you do with all this time?*

The Romans named the first month of the calendar after Janus.

Janus – the god of beginnings and the guardian of doors and entrances – was always depicted with two faces, one on the front of his head and one on the back. At midnight, the Romans imagined Janus looking back at the old year and forward to the new. They began a tradition of exchanging gifts by giving one another branches from sacred trees for good fortune. Later, coins imprinted with the god Janus became more common New Year’s gifts.

This is typically the time of year to make resolutions.

In the dictionary, ‘**RESOLUTION**’ is defined as ‘*a course of action decided upon; a fixed purpose*’. We resolve to do things differently, dispense with old bad habits and begin new good ones.

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Festivals\New Year\2006 - New Year’s Resolutions

A USA newspaper allowed the public to post New Year Resolutions on their website.
Here are a few of the most interesting ones:

‘I resolve to stop feeding the office plant leftover coffee. I will use water instead.’

‘As much as I hate government intervention, I resolve to try and get a law passed that requires every person on the face of this earth to have to use their common sense at least once a day.’

‘This year, I resolve to try real hard to stop eating McDonalds for two out of three meals a day. If that isn’t possible, I promise to at least clean the remains from my car.’

‘I hereby resolve to accept the changes occurring at work. I will try to remember that the decision-makers have a brain and will use it if necessary. Finally, I will cheer for them if it works and I will not laugh if it doesn’t.’

‘I refuse to take responsibility for my decisions, to never take the blame, not stand by my promises, and to ignore the needs of the poor. In short, my resolution is to become a politician!’








‘I resolve to become as wonderful a person as my dog thinks I am.’

You can probably guess the five most popular resolutions made every year.

Number five... ‘TO TAKE UP A NEW HOBBY’, number four... ‘TO MAKE MORE MONEY’, number three... ‘TO IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS’, number two... ‘TO STOP SMOKING’, and the most popular New Year’s Resolution is... you guessed it, ‘TO LOSE WEIGHT’.

‘A woman walked into her bathroom at home. As she did, she saw her husband weighing himself on the bathroom scales, sucking in his stomach. The woman thought to herself, “He thinks that he will weigh less by sucking in his stomach”. So, the woman rather sarcastically said to her husband, “That’s not going to help”. Her husband said, “Sure it will. It’s the only way I can see the numbers”.’

A list of New Year Resolutions (from ‘THE SALVATIONIST’, 7 January 2006):

-  *I will get my weight down below 13st.*
-  *I will watch my calories until I get below 13st 7lb.*
-  *I will follow my new diet religiously until I get below 14st.*
-  *I will try to develop a realistic attitude about my weight.*
-  *I will workout five days a week.*
-  *I will workout three days a week.*
-  *I will try to drive past a gym at least once a week.*




After the overindulgence of Christmas, some make resolutions to change their habits and their way of life. A new year gives us an opportunity to start fresh and better ourselves. But come the middle of January we somehow forget our resolutions and go back to our old ways.

It is so easy to forget the commitments and resolutions we make at New Year.

‘A man moved into a retirement community to spend the rest of his life there. It wasn’t long until he had made a number of friends among the other residents. There was one lady he was especially attracted to, and she was attracted to him. So they spent a lot of time

together. Finally one evening he proposed, asking her to marry him. The next morning he woke up remembering his proposal, but he couldn't remember her answer. So he went to her and said, "I'm really embarrassed. I proposed to you last night but I can't remember if you said 'Yes' or 'No'." "Oh, thank goodness!" she replied. "I remembered saying 'Yes' but I couldn't remember who asked me".'

RESOLUTION

-  RESOLUTION means 'to resolve'.
-  RESOLVE means 'to make up one's mind, decide firmly'.
-  RESOLVED means 'resolute, determined'.

Let us look at some NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS that will help us get a good start in 2007...

1. I RESOLVE TO ENQUIRE OF THE LORD

'Jehoshaphat resolved to enquire of the LORD.'

II Chronicles, 20:3, NIV

Not enquiring of the Lord is a risky business... It cost King Saul his life.

'Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD; he did not keep the word of the LORD, and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not enquire of the LORD. So the LORD put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David, son of Jesse.'

I Chronicles, 10:13-14, NIV

'In the account in I Samuel, 28, Saul asked the Lord for guidance but received no answer; this account implies that he did not ask God for help. The answer to this apparent contradiction lies in understanding Saul's motives and the timing of his request to God. His frantic requests came only when he had tried everything his own way. He never went to God unless there was nowhere else to turn. When he finally asked, God refused to answer. Saul sought God only when it suited him, and God rejected him for his constant stubbornness and rebellion.'

"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes

Not enquiring of the Lord is a risky business... It caused King David his only failure.

'David said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not enquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way".'

I Chronicles, 15:12-13, NIV

David refers to the incident recorded in I Chronicles, 13:8-11 and II Samuel, 6:1-11.

David consulted with the leaders and the people about his plan to carry the Ark of the Covenant back home to Israel. Everyone believed it was a good idea and sure to succeed.

However, it was to become David's one and only failure. As the Ark was being brought back to Israel on a new cart, the oxen stumbled. Uzzah, trying to steady the Ark with his hand, was killed instantly for touching it. The mistake was not in David's desire to move the Ark but in his method for its return. David either ignored or was unaware of the specific instructions in God's Law about how the Ark was to be moved. Obviously he had discovered his mistake and was now preparing to correct it.

Sometimes the King of Israel remembered the Lord.

'Jehoshaphat resolved to enquire of the LORD.'

II Chronicles, 20:3, NIV

The King prayed and the Lord graciously answered his prayer.

"We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you."

"Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the battle is not yours, but God's... You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you."

II Chronicles, 20:12b, 15b, 17a, NIV

I can identify with many people in the Bible, including King Jehoshaphat.

Sometimes, perhaps more than not, I, like Paul, do not know what to do. I am like Jonah in the Whale or Joseph in the Pit – where the only way to look is up!

"Take your position... Stand firm... See the deliverance the Lord will give you."

*I do not ask thee, Lord, that all my life may be
An easy, smooth and pleasant path; 'twould not be good for me.
But, O I ask today, that grace and strength be given
To keep me fighting all the way that leads to God and Heaven!*

*I do not ask thee, Lord, that tears may never flow,
Or that the world may always smile upon me as I go.
From thee fell drops of blood; a thorn-crown pressed thy brow;
Thy suffering brought thee victory then, and thou canst help me now.
Fannie Jolliffe, SASB 586:1-2*

2. I RESOLVE NOT TO SIN

'Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.'

Psalms, 17:3, NIV

Was David saying he was sinless?

Far from a proud assumption of purity, David's claim was an understanding of his relationship with God. In **Psalms, 32** and **Psalms, 51**, David freely acknowledged his own sins before the Lord. Nevertheless his relationship with God was one of close fellowship and constant

repentance and forgiveness. His claim to goodness, therefore, was based on his continual seeking after God.

'LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.'

Psalms, 139:1-3, NIV

*'Sometimes we don't let people get to know us completely because we are afraid they will discover something about us that they won't like. But God already knows everything about us, even to the number of hairs on our heads (see **Matthew, 10:30**), and still he accepts and loves us. God is with us through every situation, in every trial – protecting, loving, guiding. He knows and loves us completely.'*

"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes

In **'THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN'** (see **Luke, 15:8-10**), the woman lights a candle and searches the house looking for one lost coin (out of ten).

The Lord does just the same.

He sees that which we have hidden away – pain, suffering, anxiety...

He sees everything that we hide from each other – family, friends, perhaps even ourselves.

He sees and continues to love and care – he considers us precious – he does not condemn, he can accept us without approving of our deliberate wrongdoing!

How do you feel about God searching deep in your heart?

Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt...

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind; sight, riches, healing of the mind...

Just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve...

All my best works are naught, please they not thee;

Far past my busy hands thine eye doth see

Into the depths of mind, searching the plan designed,

Gladdened when thou dost find first of all, thee.

Leslie Taylor-Hunt, SASB 416:4

3. I RESOLVE TO NOT DEFILE THE TEMPLE

'Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.'

Daniel, 1:8, NIV

'Daniel resolved not to eat this food, either because it was forbidden by Jewish law, such as pork, or because accepting the king's food and drink was the first step toward depending on his gifts and favours. Although Daniel was in a culture that did not honour God, he still obeyed God's laws.'

"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes

Daniel resolved to be devoted to principle and to be committed to a course of action.

When Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself, he was being true to a lifelong determination to do what was right and not to give in to the pressures around him at the time.

Daniel was a vegetarian, and it took him ten days to prove it to the King's Officials.

But, there is more to it than that... I suspect that Daniel knew something Paul stated later.

'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?'

I Corinthians, 6:19, NIV

What did Paul mean when he said that our body belongs to God?

Many people say they have the right to do whatever they want with their own bodies. Although they think that this is freedom, they are really enslaved to their own desires. When we become Christians, the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. Therefore, we no longer own our bodies. That God bought us **'WITH A HIGH PRICE'** refers to slaves purchased at an auction. Christ's death freed us from sin but also obligates us to his service. If you live in a building owned by someone else, you try not to violate the building's rules. Because your body belongs to God, you must not violate his standards for living.

I would be thy holy temple, sacred and indwelt by thee;

Naught then could stain my commission, 'tis thy divine charge to me.

Brindley Boon, SASB 786:1

4. I RESOLVE TO KNOW CHRIST

'I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.'

I Corinthians, 2:2, NIV

So often, if we are not careful, little things take priority over what really matters.

They often get blown out of all proportion. (Illustration: Home League Tea Cups at Goldthorpe.)

Paul made a conscious effort to do two things:

 *To know nothing except Jesus.*

 *To know Christ crucified.*

'I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing with his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection of the dead.'

Philippians, 3:10-11, NIV

Oh, to know the power of your risen life, and to know you in your sufferings,

To become like you in your death, my Lord, so with you to live and never die.

"IN 2007, I RESOLVE THAT I WILL..."