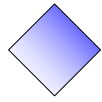


The Voice of Truth



January 5, 2014

Biblical New Year Resolutions By Jimmy Pettigrew

Another year passes and we are made aware of our most precious, fragile gift: time. Benjamin Franklin wrote “Dost thou love life? Then waste not time, for that is the stuff that life is made of.” Our use of time determines success or failure. Surely it is fitting that we make some Biblical new year’s resolutions to direct us into the future. Let us look at the word “resolutions” for this article.

1. Let us resolve to stay in the (R) Race (Hebrews 12:1). In this race, we must be able to take it and not give up. Paul said, *“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run ...”* (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). We need to get rid of everything that would slow us down or hold us back, or detour us from running the race of our Christian life. Stay in the race!

2. Let us resolve to stop making (E) Excuses (Luke 14:16 ff). A common practice among men is that of excuse-making for their failure to do their duty. Many in the churches take lightly the command to come together for worshipping God. So they make plans as these three did in (Luke 14:16 ff), and use excuses why couldn’t assemble with the saints (Matthew 6:33; Hebrews 10:25). The Master was angry with the three, and all who would lightly considered His generous offer. Stop making excuses, and do your best!

3. Let us resolve to be good (S) Soldiers for Christ (2 Timothy 2:3). This army is made up of all volunteers. Our enlistment began when by faith (Hebrews 11:6) we repented (Luke 13:3) of our sins, confessed (Matthew 10:32-33) the name of our Commander in Chief (Hebrews 2:10) and was buried into Him for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:27). As a result, one is in subjection to God’s will, a member of the spiritual army of God. As soldiers in the Lord’s army we need to *“Fight the good fight of faith”* (1 Timothy 6:12). Brethren, God has a

right to expect godly living, cheerful giving, Bible reading, praying, loving and faithful attendance of worship services from His soldiers. After all we volunteered! We need to say as Paul, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”* (2 Timothy 4:7).

4. Let us resolve to keep our (O) Obligations to God (Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12; 11:1; Matthew 22:37). We, as God’s children have the obligation, duty, we promised the Lord that we will ever be faithful in all His duties as a part of the bride, the church. We promise to love the Lord, the church, to keep the commandments of the Lord, to walk in all His ways and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart. May I implore you to live true to your word being a Christian!

5. Let us resolve to be united in (L) Love (Ephesians 5:1-2; John 13:34-35). John commands Christians to love one another (1 John 3:11; 4:7, 16). The lack of such love causes grievous harm to the growth and welfare of the body of Christ (Galatians 5:15). If there is one thing that all men know about the teaching of Christ, they know that He emphasized love (John 13:35). How do we know that we truly love the brethren? John says, *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments”* (1 John 5:2).

6. Let us resolve to be (U) unselfish (2 Corinthians 5:15). Who had died for all, deserves all glory! Christians are bought or redeemed for the Lord’s own possession (Ephesians 5:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19). One of the most difficult things in life is denying self, and living apart from selfish desires and ambitions, but to be a disciple of Christ it must be done (Matthew 16:24-25). We *“no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God”* (1 Peter 4:2). *“Let no man seek his own”* (1 Corinthians 10:24). The love of Christ constrains us to leave self!

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7. Let us resolve to use our (T) Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). God requires that we use our talents and not only use them, but to use them faithfully. Woe to the brother or sister that shirks their responsibility, for their eternal destiny hangs in the balance. Use them or lose them!

8. Let us resolve to keep our saving (I) Influence (Philippians 1:27). The conversation (manner of life) of the Christian be as cometh the Gospel. The manner of life of the Christian will be either a real asset or a significant liability to the cause of Christ. The conduct of the Christian should adorn the doctrine of God (**Titus 2:10**). Adorn means to beautify. The life of a faithful Christian reveals the beauty of God's will and way. There is nothing more impressive than the influence of a pure Christian life. Show the world what a Christian is (**Matthew 5:13-16**)!

9. Let us resolve to be (O) Orderly. Orderly means a soldier assigned to perform services. We are soldiers in the Lord's army, and we need to be doers, not hearers only (**James 1:22**). It is absolutely essential that we, being followers of Jesus, emulate His example in doing the will of our heavenly Father (**John 4:24**). God pronounces a blessing upon all those who both hear and do His will (**Revelation 22:14**).

10. Let us resolve to be truly a (N) New person in Christ

(2 Corinthians 5:17). We are new in Christ; the old sinful self has been put to death (**Romans 6:6**). The old man is the sinful man, a servant of sin (**Romans 6:17**), but in Christ we are new people! The new man is "created in righteousness and true holiness" (**Ephesians 4:24**). A new man is indeed a Christ-like man (**Colossians 3:10**). Are we Christ like? Do people see a different between the old you and the new you (**1 Peter 4:4**)?

11. Let us resolve to (S) Support this congregation! I love the church of our Lord! Have you ever wondered just what you could do to support, to help this congregation be what God desires for it? We can support, help this congregation by:

- A. Living pure lives.
- B. Giving the men of this congregation support.
- C. Promoting love and unity.
- D. Never bringing shame to this congregation.
- E. Giving as God as commanded.
- F. Doing the best you can for the cause of Christ.
- G. Attending every service.
- H. Putting God first.

What are you going to do with this new year God has given you? ♦

What Do I Owe My Congregation?

Author unknown

I owe it my loyalty. I must help carry out every good work it undertakes. I should help other congregations in special efforts, but I should not neglect my home congregation. I owe it my dependability. I am depending on it for many things it does in my behalf. It is not fair and right for me to depend on it and not be such that it cannot depend on me.

I owe it my financial support. It takes money to operate the church and preach the gospel. I am responsible to the Lord to give as He has prospered me. My home congregation has first call on my financial ability, for if the members of the church do not support the work of the home congregation, it will not be supported. The expenses go on whether I am there or not, so I should make up my contribution when absent.

I owe it my presence. If everyone stayed home there would be no worship of God. I am responsible as anyone to attend all of my congregation's services. I must not be a parasite.

I owe it the influence of a godly life. The life I live either helps others to obey the gospel or makes it the harder for them. How I live affects the work of the church and the salvation of the lost. I should live in such a way that my life will be blessing to others. ♦

THINK ABOUT IT!

When a farmer stops plowing his land, stops planting seed, and stops harvesting his crops, he has stopped doing those things that identify him as being a farmer. When a Christian stops attending worship services regularly, stops studying, stops giving as he has been prospered, and has stopped working for the Lord, he has stopped being a Christian because he has stopped doing those things that identify him as a Christian. "By their fruits ye shall know them," (**Matthew 7:20**). ♦

“Dost Thou Steal?”

By Jarrod Jacobs

In **Romans 2:21-22**, the apostle Paul warned the Roman Christians about the dangers of hypocrisy. He noted some tell-tale signs of hypocrisy when he wrote, *“Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?”* It is a careful student, and thus a careful teacher, who recognizes the fact that he cannot teach a person one thing and then practice something different! To do so breeds hypocrisy and results in the loss of good influence upon Christians and non-Christians. Yet, hypocrisy is an easy trap in which to fall! Many have played the hypocrite, while denying this reality. When spending time in self-examination, are we acting as hypocrites? Let us study and see.

The Word “Hypocrite”

The word “hypocrite” as used in the Old Testament means: “one defiled in mind and conscience, yet concealing it, and pretending to be outwardly what he is not inwardly; to have zeal and affection towards God, when his heart is far from him” (*Wilson’s O.T. Word Studies*, p. 224). W.E. Vine translates “hypocrite” in this way: “primarily one who answers, then a stage-actor; hence the word became used metaphorically as a dissembler, a hypocrite” (*Vine’s*, p. 582). In other words, one who says one thing and does another, a pretender.

Pretend To Be Someone You Are Not

Sadly, there are those who are “Christians in name only”. In other words, they are hypocrites. While they pretend to be Christians, they are actually children of the Devil, not unlike the Jews in **John 8:44**.

The Old Testament records occasions where people literally pretended to be someone else. For example, in **Genesis 27:1-46**, we read of Jacob deceiving his father. That day, Jacob received the blessing that belonged to Esau. How was this accomplished? He dressed and acted like his brother (**Gen. 27:18-30**). This is literally what it means to be a hypocrite. Yet, we do not have to dress as someone else to be a hypocrite!

In the New Testament, we read the account of

“Christians” pretending to be unselfish givers, when in truth, they were selfish. This is found in **Acts 5:1-11**. Ananias and Sapphira pretended to give all the money gained from selling a possession (**v. 1**). In truth, they kept back part (**v. 2**), and were found to be liars (**v. 4-5**). **Acts 5** shows us that hypocrisy is a vulgar thing that needs to be avoided at all costs.

The hypocrite has always been presented in a negative light throughout the Bible. On 15 separate occasions, Jesus rebuked the people listening, calling them “hypocrites.” After reading these definitions, does this sound like you? Are you pretending to be a Christian? Are you an actor?

Teach One Thing And Do Another

Many today have an attitude that is often expressed as: “do as I say, and not as I do.” My friend, this will not work. This concept was what the apostle Paul was fighting against in **Romans 2**. How sad it is to see the transparent efforts of some to teach others the way of God while they themselves act as the Devil!

The Pharisees were known for teaching one thing, and doing another. In **Matthew 23:1-12**, Jesus told the multitude and the disciples not to act like the Pharisees, *“For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men...”* (**Matt. 23:4-5**). If you are like this, rest assured, people can see through you. You are fooling no one!

Conclusion

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (**II Cor. 13:5**). It is up to all of us to keep away from hypocrisy, and make sure it is not in our lives. Are you a pretender? Do you teach others that *“now is the day of salvation”* (**II Cor. 6:2**), but live like there is no tomorrow? Do not be a hypocrite! Live for Christ! Who knows what good we can do in the Lord’s kingdom when we live that sincere, genuine life, that reflects Christ in all we do (**Gal. 2:20**)!

Credit: The Old Paths – 5/29/11 •

A pint of example is worth a barrel full of advice. •

WHAT IF IT'S NOT IN THE SCRIPTURES?

By David J. Riggs

On several occasions, after I had stated that a certain religious belief or practice was not in the Scriptures, I received the reply, "Does that make it wrong?" Let me affirm plainly and emphatically in words which cannot be misunderstood that **it most certainly does make it wrong!** When one believes or practices something in religion which is not in the Scriptures, all of the following divine principles immediately apply:

"The Bible doesn't say not to." The Bible doesn't need to condemn a practice to make it sinful and wrong. It is wrong when it is not in the Scriptures for it violates the above principles. Similarly, many use the time worn reply, "Isn't our practice a good work; look at the good we're doing." If it's not in the Scriptures, if cannot be a good work because, again, it is condemned by the above principles.

What should we say, therefore, about the many things which are practiced in religions today that are not in the Scriptures? For example, what about baptizing infants, sprinkling for baptism, christening, calling a man Reverend, instrumental music in worship, taking money out of the church treasury and sending it to human institutions, etc.? Aren't all of the above sixteen principles violated by such additions?

How can people claim to be followers of Christ when they have no respect whatsoever for the things which Christ said? How can they claim love and respect for Christ when they continue to do things in religion which have been introduced solely by man? Spending time and effort to learn the Word of Christ and continuing steadfastly therein, demonstrates genuine love and respect for Christ. Similarly, a rejection of all traditions and doctrines of men confirms true love and respect for Christ. Those who are doing things not authorized by Christ have no love and respect for Him. *Credit: <http://oakridgechurch.com/riggs/> ♦*

In effort to justify their practice, people often argue,

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com