

The End Is Better Than The Beginning

Ecclesiastes 7:8 *"The end of a matter is better than its beginning; patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit."*

As we end another year, will you do anything differently this coming year? Same routines? Same schedules? Same habits? Same financial picture? Same spiritual picture? Same type of books read? Same friends to hang out with? Or, will you put a stake in the ground and determine that this coming year will be different? More spirituality? More involvement with my church family? More reaching out? More faith? More time for family? Better saving financially? Better spiritual habits? Better care of your body? A better year?

We often call such things, "resolutions" meaning we have "resolved" to do things. But often, our first of the year resolutions last about a month and they are gone. Back to the old ways, old habits and old thoughts. Eventually these add up to a lifetime and that defines our life.

I have found that the best diet in the world is the mirror. When a person is tired of the way they look, they will do something. The best financial plan is your bank statement. When you are tired of living paycheck to paycheck, you will do something. The best spiritual plan is Sunday—when you are tired of giving lip service to the God that loves you so much, you'll start making changes. The motivation is I want to do better. I want to be better.

The end is better than the beginning...Let's make it so, by living for Jesus every day.

- by Roger Shouse

God Belongs In The Center

In the early chapters of Numbers, we are treated to a layout of the camp of Israel. Three tribes camped on the east side (2:1-9), three on the south (2:10-16), three on the west (2:18-24), and three on the north (2:25-30). In the center of the camp, the Levites were to set up the tabernacle (2:17). Why is this important? It means that God was at the center of the camp, and God was to be their focus, at the heart of everything Israel did. Dads, what about your camp? Is God set up at the center? Is He the focus of all that you are trying to accomplish with your family? Do your children understand that He comes first in all that you do?

- by Rusty Miller

What Needs Changing?

When you look into the mirror and your face appears dirty, it is your face, not the mirror that needs attention. The Bible is the mirror of the soul. It reveals our imperfections and shows us how to make corrections. However, some try to rework the Bible instead of reshaping their lives. Don't make that mistake. When you look into the "*perfect law of liberty*", continue in it. Don't be a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work (James 1:25). Don't try to change the word; let the word change your life.

- by Lloyd Atherton

The Church Is Sufficient

As a result of having the whole council of God preached by Paul, the church of Ephesus was in the unity of the faith. (see Eph. 4:1-6) This gave them all that they needed to do anything that the Lord wanted done. They were completely independent spiritually from everything else on earth. They looked to no school, paper, or center or influence. They were not a part of any super organization that exercised control over them. God needs no unit larger than the local

congregation to do his work. The local church is sufficient; it is all-sufficient!

- by James P. Miller

Resolutions Require Commitment!

A reportedly true story is told about a school principal who, at the end of the year, encouraged all his teachers to write out their resolution for the new year. He promised to post these on the faculty bulletin board so that all could benefit from them.

When the resolutions were posted, all the teachers crowded around to read the suggestions from their co-workers. Suddenly one of the teachers erupted in a fit of anger. "Mine is not here! He's purposefully left mine off the board. He doesn't care about me. That just shows how little I'm appreciated around here!" The principal was shocked. He had not intentionally left anyone's resolution off the board. He rushed to his desk and found the missing note under a pile of papers. He immediately proceeded to post it. The resolution read: ***"I resolve not to let little things upset me anymore."***

What we see here is a clear case of resolution without commitment. All of us are guilty of this -- and it happens too often. Failed diets, abandoned exercise plans, neglected projects, etc., are all the result of lack of commitment.

But, without doubt, the most serious area of concern is in our spiritual service to God. At one time or another we have all said, "I need to do better, and I intend to do so!" It may involve our attendance at the worship services and Bible studies, or it might be in personal study and prayer. Perhaps it involves personal work, or sharing hospitality with other Christians. Whatever it might be, the resolution is good, but we need commitment to see the task through.

As we enter into this New Year, let's do some serious personal evaluation; make some needed resolutions; and then, FOLLOW THEM THROUGH! Think!

- by Greg Gwin