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A Worthy New Year's Resolution

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

Introduction

1. Before each of us here today is a new year of possibility and opportunity.
2. Should the Lord tarry his coming and we live to see January 1, 2025, we each have . . .
 - a. 12 months
 - b. 52 weeks
 - c. 8,760 hours
 - d. 525,600 minutes
 - e. 31,536,000 seconds before us.
3. The question for each of us this morning is what will you do with all that time?
4. The beginning of a new year is typically the time when people make resolutions.
5. I don't know how many of you will make resolutions this year.
6. What I do know is that there are more of us who make New Year's resolutions than there are those who keep them.
 - a. 23% of those who make resolutions quit before the end of the first week,
 - b. 43% quit by the end of January
 - c. Only 9% (less than 1 out of 10) of Americans who make resolutions complete them.
7. This morning as we contemplate the new year which is before us, I would like you to consider something which the apostle Paul wrote to the church in the ancient city of Philippi.
8. If there ever was a New Year's resolution in Scripture, this would have been it.
9. As we examine Paul's statement concerning his past and future, I believe we will find much here to benefit us in our growth in 2024 as God's chosen people.

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I. The Reason For Resolutions

A. THERE IS SOMETHING WE WISH TO CHANGE

1. We make resolutions because there is something in our lives we want to improve.
2. During the last week of October this year, a survey was conducted among individuals from 18-64 as to their resolutions for 2024.
3. Of the top eight resolutions given, here are the first five:
 - a. Save more money.
 - b. Exercise more.
 - c. Eat healthier.
 - d. Spend more time with family/friends.
 - e. Lose weight.¹
4. As I consider these items, there is something conspicuously absent.
5. Nothing of a spiritual nature is mentioned:
 - a. Does this mean that the respondents all thought their lives were just fine in this aspect?
 - b. Or does it mean that they did not consider such things important?
6. Are you satisfied with your faith and your own personal growth as a Christian?

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B. WE ARE ALWAYS SEEKING TO GROW IN OUR FAITH

1. When it comes to our spiritual lives, we must never be content or satisfied.
2. Your eternal soul is your most valuable possession and where you will spend the rest of eternity should be your greatest concern.
3. The wise man Solomon, after he examined the whole of life concluded that we must "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of

¹Source: Statista Consumer Insights (417 U.S. respondents (18-64 y / o) surveyed Oct. 19-29,2023)

man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, ESV).

4. Though the apostle Paul had fought many spiritual battles since his conversion and though he had grown much over those years, he readily acknowledged . . .
 - a. “Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect” (Philippians 3:12a, NASB95).
 - b. “I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet” (Philippians 3:13a, NASB95).
5. Paul understood that the process which began at his conversion was not complete.
6. If we consider ourselves as having reached the finish line, we stop making progress in our own spiritual journey.
7. Instead, we must see ourselves as did Paul:
 - a. I’m not perfect yet.
 - b. I haven’t yet laid hold of the crown of righteousness which the Lord promises to give me on that day.
8. We must never forget that we are a work in progress.

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II. Our Resolution Must Have A Focus

A. THAT FOCUS SHOULD BE THE “ONE THING”

1. Paul said, “But one thing I do” (v. 13).
2. It is interesting just how many times you encounter the phrase “one thing” in Scripture.
3. Luke tells us of a rich ruler who came to Jesus asking, “what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18:18).
 - a. Jesus told him to keep the commandments, “Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother” (Luke 18:20).

- b. He told Jesus, “ All these things I have kept from my youth” (Luke 18:21).
- c. Jesus responded, “One thing you still lack” (Luke 18:22).
- 4. When Martha, who had been busy working in the kitchen, complained to Jesus about the fact that her sister Mary was listening to Him instead of helping her, Jesus said, “one thing is necessary” (Luke 10:42).
- 5. In Psalm 27:4, David wrote, “One thing I have asked of the Lord” (ESV).
- 6. Paul’s statement here, “one thing I do” is a statement of devotion, devotion which must fill our lives.

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B. MY WHEEL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WHEEL

- 1. Is our faith a part of our lives or is it the whole of our lives?
- 2. We often compartmentalize our lives: work, school, sports, family, hobbies, church.
- 3. We think of each of them as a separate part of our lives.
- 4. When we do this, we don’t allow our faith to show up at work or school, in the sports we play or hobbies in which we engage.
- 5. Jesus refuses to be treated as a spoke in the wheel of your life.
- 6. He must be all or nothing — the one thing.
- 7. Many of us grew up singing, “He’s my Rock, my Sword, My shield, He’s my wheel in the middle of the wheel, He the fairest of ten thousand to my soul.”
- 8. David sang words similar to this in Psalm 18:2.

“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”
(Psalm 18:2, NASB95)

- 9. Jesus said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37, NASB95).

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III. Our Resolution Requires That We Let Go Of The Past

A. "FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND"

1. Too often our focus on failures in the past prevents from finding success in the future.
2. Perhaps you made a resolution or set some goal in the past, but quit along the way for whatever reason.
3. Sadly, our failure in the past rears its ugly head to remind us now that we didn't complete the goal then, why should we think we will be successful now.
4. Paul said that he forgot those things which were behind.
5. He forgot his past successes as well as his failures.
 - a. He had a heritage which, as a Jew, gave him much reason for boasting (cf. *Philippians 3:4b-6*).

"If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless." (*Philippians 3:4-6, NASB95*)

- b. He also had a past of which he was much ashamed (cf. *Galatians 1:13*).

"... I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;" (*Galatians 1:13, NASB95*)

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B. THINGS YOU AND I MUST FORGET

1. Past sin
 - a. God chooses not only to forgive our sin, but to forget it as well.

"... I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (*Jeremiah 31:34, NASB95*)

- b. Guilt over our past sins can so burden us down that we can't see our way ahead.

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2. Past failures

- a. How many of us because of our failures in the past have convinced ourselves we can't do something.
- b. Solomon once wrote, "a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again" (Proverbs 24:16a, NASB95).

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3. Past bitterness

- a. Some of you may still be carrying some bitterness around over a slight or some injustice done to you by another person.
- b. Perhaps Joseph, more than any other Old Testament individual, had reason to be bitter:
 - 1) Betrayed by his brothers.
 - 2) Lied about by his master's wife.
 - 3) Forgotten by his fellow prisoners.
- c. When he finally revealed himself to his brothers, he said, "do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:5, NASB95).

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5. Past successes

- a. We love to reminisce about the "good ole days."
- b. It is easy to dwell on our past successes.
- c. We do not win races by looking backward, but by focusing on the finish line.
- d. A few verses before our text, in *Philippians 3:7*, Paul wrote, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ."

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[Completing our resolution requires that we . . .]

IV. Our Resolutions Requires That We Work Toward The Goal

A. "I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL"

1. Many consider the apostle Paul to be a spiritual giant.
2. Thirteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament are by him.
3. And yet, we still find him saying that he has not arrived.
4. Salvation is just the "starting gun," the beginning of the race which we all run as Christians.
2. It is a race which God has "set before us", one which we must "run with endurance" (Hebrews 12:1).
3. None of us as Christians arrive in this life; we each keep pressing toward the goal.
4. The picture Paul paints is of a runner . . .
 - a. His body bent over
 - b. Hand outstretched
 - c. Eyes focused on the finish line
5. It is a race in which we are focused and determined, eager to reach our goal.

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win." (1 Corinthians 9:24, NASB95)

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B. THE PRIZE THAT AWAITS US

1. Paul told the Christians in Thessalonica that it was God who had called them through the gospel which He had preached to them (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

"It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 2:14, NASB95)

2. In his final letter to Timothy, he spoke of the prize which he knew awaited him (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8, NASB95)

3. Peter spoke of the prize as our inheritance and said that it is one which “can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3, NIV84).

Conclusion

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1. As you set your goals for the new year, I would like for you to ask yourself two questions:

- a. Will my goal glorify God?

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NASB95)

- b. Will it make me more like Him?

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children” (Ephesians 5:1, NASB95)

2. Most importantly, if you continue down the path you are presently following, will you be able to say at the end of your life, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:7-8, NASB95)