

Resolutions

Introduction:

- Why do we make New Year's resolutions?
- The end of one year and the beginning of a New Year is a good time to pause, think, and reflect on the past year. A chance to fix mistakes, correct deficiencies, and to do better and to become better people than we were /are at the end of the past year.
- A quick look at the state of our world, our country, and perhaps even our own hearts makes it very clear that there is lots of room for improvement.
- Of course there is something we have to do before we can go on or move forward. We have to look God in the eye (metaphorically speaking) and we have to face ourselves in the mirror and admit that there are things we need to work on
- Before we begin thinking about what needs to be changed and how we might go about it, it would be worth our time to look to the bible for some examples or standards. Change for change's sake is counter productive, wears us out, and leaves us discouraged because in the end what changed were the unimportant things. (Re arranging the deck chairs on the titanic after it hit the ice burg)
- Psalm 72 provides us with a good starting point.

P1 Psalm 72:1-7 ():

- This psalm probably was a prayer. Perhaps used during the Kings coronation. More than likely one of King David's descendants.
- V-1(a) (*Endow the king with your justice, O God*)
 - If there is no justice then there can be no peace.
- V-1(b) (*the royal son with your righteousness*)
 - Both halves of the first verse combine to point to something greater than just hopes for the King and his son.
 - They point to grater possibilities and larger hopes. Something lasting. Peace and justice in our time - but more importantly in our children and grandchildren's time as well.
 - Asking God to grant the King God's justice is a good stating place, but it isn't the finish line.
 - Last fall I bought a fine new lawn mower. I got to brag about it to my friends and it looks good in the garage. However, Ellen is of the opinion that I need to actually use it from time to time.
 - And so it is with the prayer for the king.
- V-4 (*He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor*)
 - In this verse we see some of what the people were expecting - or at least hoping the new King would do. All of these actions stem from sharing God's sense of justice.
 - We see this same thing, same thought at the very core of Christ's life and ministry.
 - He healed the sick and injured, he made the lame to walk, the blind to see, ect.
- V-7 (*In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more*)
 - This verse echo's and affirms what the two parts of V-1 were hinting at. Till the moon is no more
- V-14 (*He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight*)
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- Solomon asked God for wisdom and the prayer was answered.
- This prayer reflects the people's desire and or hope that the king's rule will be of God.
- Big or small. VIP or average. Rich and powerful or poor and powerless, the key to success is the same. If God isn't in it, it isn't worth doing.

P2 Ephesians 3:1-9 ():

- V-1 (*For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--*)

- *It is worth while to pause here and wonder/discuss just why Paul is in prison.*
- The answer to the question about why Paul is a prisoner – the long and the short: Satan and the powers that be didn't want the Christian message proclaimed. They didn't want to change. They didn't want to give up what they had- and because they were not going to change they didn't want anyone else to either.
 - Eph 2:8/9 (*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.*)
 - Eph 2:13/14 (*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,*)
 - Eph 2:17/18 (*He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*)
- That's why Paul was in prison. That's why Paul declares himself to be a PRISONER of CHRIST
- V-4/5 (*In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets*)
 - There were lots of Old Testament references to Christ. The prophets foretold of his coming. They even mentioned the virgin birth and the general area where he would be born.
 - The angels themselves told Mary and Joseph about God's plans and Jesus- and they didn't really understand
 - So now Paul is saying something along the lines of you had to be there. Only turning the tables - we could not and did not understand the prefaces and the reality until Jesus was here.
 - The mystery has been revealed.
- V-8 (*Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*)
 - There is good news and hope for us in this passage. No one is too low, too slow, too uneducated; to anything that God cannot and is not willing to use them in God's work.
 - In fact it seems to be just the opposite. The more powerful you are the less likely God will call you and you are less likely to respond to God's.
 - Remember the rich young man that asked what he needed to do to gain eternal life?
- V-9 (*and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things*)
 - In Jesus God was doing a new thing. Remember back to the Psalm and the prayer for the king. A prayer asking for God's sense of justice for the king.
 - Remember that this prayer, this Psalm was written in the Old Testament days. In the days when an eye for an eye was the standard.
 - It was a beginning but it was not the end. The idea of let the punishment fit the crime was a step in the right direction.
 - However, God had something else in mind- something that we would not understand until we saw it in action and for many not even then. The idea of mercy instead of justice.
 - Eph 2:8/9 (*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.*)

Conclusion:

- Offer mercy instead of justice (or even anger)
- Love more
- Read more
- Reveal yourself. Open your heart and soul to God and to others