

Saturday, December 31, 2011 – I am Resolved...

**Phil. 3:14** - I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus...

In a few hours, 2011 will be history. With each passing of the milestone to a new year, humans make resolutions which they hope will bring positive results from an aspect of their life which was deficient in the prior year. I have already heard some talk of how they plan to eat better, exercise, and try to be healthy. Others have decided to find new jobs or spend more time with those they love. The start of a new year is a popular time to put these goals in place. Many of the principles which need to be applied in order to have success in secular goals need to also be applied for a good spiritual outlook.

#### READ THE BIBLE THROUGH THIS YEAR

Many may already have this practice and a good practice it is. In **1Timothy 4:13**, the Bible says, “**Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.**” Paul was encouraging Timothy to make sure that he spent time reading. In order for the New Testament writers to be able to quote the Old Testament like they did, they would have had to spend a large amount of time reading the Old Testament. The closer we come to God, the further we are from the devil and his temptations. Therefore, it seems logical that each of us determine to spend time reading the word of God this year. There are daily Bible reading schedules on the internet to help in this honorable goal. Did you know you can read the whole New Testament in just 11 hours?

#### PRAY MORE OFTEN THIS YEAR

Paul said, “**pray without ceasing**” (**1Thessalonians 5:17**). Jesus spent the night in prayer (**Luke 6:12**). Jesus, in the hours prior to His death, prayed for so many different groups of people, including you and me (**John 17**). Paul beseeched the brethren in Thessalonica saying, “**Brethren, pray for us**” (**1Thessalonians 5:25**). There are a vast number of times when Paul mentions to various churches and individuals that he is praying for them. These commands and examples are evidence that we too need to be spending large amounts of time in prayer. We have a long list it seems of people who are close to us and need our prayers. Let us all make time each year to spend time in prayer to God. These two things — reading the Bible and praying to God — will help improve our individual relationships with God.

#### CHOOSE TO BE INVOLVED

In the book of Acts, there is recorded a model of the first-century church. There were no ‘pew-warmers’ or people who were not involved in the work of the church. This year, choose to be involved in more of the work of the church. Do not assume that someone else will do it and that the work does not need you.

#### ATTEND EVERY SERVICE

The writer of the book of Hebrews said it well when he said, “**And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching**” (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). Some try to say that the only service which is required is the Sunday morning service but I still do not see that in the context of this passage. If we can attend and do not attend, then we are forsaking the assembly.

The assembly accomplishes many different things. It is an opportunity to worship God, the Creator (**John 4:24**). It is a chance to encourage the saints (**Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16**). It is an opportunity to learn more about the will of God. Thus, it is a curious to me why someone would not want to be there.

## SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH ONE PERSON THIS YEAR

We all have friends who are not members of the Lord's church. There is someone in each of our lives whom we would like to see be converted. It is time to rise above our comfort zones and make a difference in the lives of others. Will some criticize and ridicule us? No doubt. Will we be made fun of? You can count on it. Do we need to do it anyway? Absolutely!

When the early disciples "went everywhere preaching the word" (**Acts 8:4**), they were continuing the things that "Jesus began both to do and to teach" (**Acts 1:1**).

The story of the early church is the story of the Lord continuing to do, through His people, the work that He Himself had begun in His personal ministry.

Someone once said, "Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work today".

**1 Cor. 15:58 - Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord**

We are urged to "abound" in the "work of the Lord".

Unfortunately, there are times when discouragement and defeat among the Lord's people can occur concerning the Lord's work.

We tend to be *discouraged* about our own lack of ability to teach the gospel. We tend to be *defeated* by the apparent rejection of the gospel by almost everyone we meet or because our numbers don't grow at the pace we might have envisioned.

Much of this discouragement is the result of looking at our work in the wrong way. Our work in the Lord is sowing the seed of the kingdom! Problems arise, in any endeavor, when we forget what our work is. In the Lord, our work is **presenting** the gospel to as many people as possible. Even more accurately, our work is attempting to present the gospel to as many as possible. All the Lord has ever asked us to do is "plant" and "water" — it is His part of the work to "give the increase." Paul states, "**I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase**" (**1 Cor. 3:6, 7**). When we assume responsibility for the Lord's part of the work — a thing that we have no control over — we are bound to become discouraged. But when we keep focused on what our work is, this discouragement diminishes.

The effectiveness of our work in the Lord is to be measured not in terms of responses to the Gospel, but in terms of how much seed has been sown.

If we keep focused on what it is the Lord wants us to do, He will bless what we do.

If we keep focused on what it is the Lord wants us to do, He will bless our efforts. After all, our "sufficiency" is from God: "And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are

sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God” (2 Cor. 3:4, 5).

If we are willing to sow “bountifully,” God is able to make us have an “abundance” for every good work. We need to be conscious that we are participating in the *Lord’s* work.

**“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).**

We need to be praying that God will open doors of opportunity for us to do His work.

**“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith” (2 Thess. 3:1, 2).**

May God bless you and your family in 2012!