**A NEW YEAR, A NEW OPPORTUNITY!**

Customarily, the arrival of a new year is an opportunity to reflect on the past year, make some evaluations, followed by the traditional “New Year’s Resolutions” to improve things in this next year. Sadly, most of our evaluations are rather shallow, and most of our resolutions are quickly abandoned. Before the spring arrives, most resolutions are a distant memory. Well, it doesn’t have to be that way; and, for the Christian, it ***shouldn’t*** be that way! When we reflect, it should go a little deeper than “I need to lose weight, and start exercising.” While those are fine goals, the Christian should ***also*** be thinking spiritually. So, let’s just do that for a minute…

**How is your moral life?** Are you still struggling with that bad habit? Let this be the year that you finally face the music, and kick that habit to the curb! Whether it be gossiping, cursing, drinking, or sexual lust, you need to face the reality that this is interfering with your relationship with God (1Jn.1:6; 2Jn.9; 3Jn.11)! Let this be the year you finally break that bad habit!

**How is your worship life?** Are you still using the same old, tired excuses for not assembling with your brethren (Hb.10:25)? “I’m tired from work,” “My kids have homework,” “I have a headache,” “My family came in for a visit,” “Some of the members don’t treat me right,” “I don’t like the way he preaches,” – and on it goes. Believe me, I’ve heard them all! Do you really think that the Lord is going to accept such excuses? Let this be the year you commit to a new standard of excellence in attendance! If you’re reasonably healthy, you should be here, pandemic or not!

**How are your personal devotions?** Aside from our public assemblies, do you do *your own* studying and praying? If not, how do you know you’re being told the truth (Ac.17:11)? If not, how can you grow (2Pt.2:18)? If not, how can you “draw near to God” (Jm.4:8)? A personal relationship with the Lord requires two-way communication! He speaks to us through His word; and we speak to Him in prayer! Let’s resolve to wear out a Bible this year; and to petition the Lord so much that we’re afraid He’ll get tired of listening to us (by the way, He *won’t* get tired, cf. Lk.18:1-8).

**How are your personal efforts toward the lost, weak, sick, and homebound?** We each have a personal obligation to carry the gospel to others (Ac.8:4; 2Tm.2:2). We each have personal obligations to the weak (Ga.6:1; Jm.5:19-20). We each have personal obligations to the sick and homebound (Mt.25:41-46). Note carefully that each one of these obligations are personal, and they carry eternal weight! Our excuses won’t cut it!

As I close, I want to share this poem If found several years ago. I have used it many times in my teaching to get across the point of our need to constantly evaluate our lives (Ga.6:4-5), and make any necessary corrections in our lives (1Jn.1:9). It’s by my favorite author, “anonymous.” Enjoy the poem, but learn its lesson, too!

-- Lanny Smith

**"DO BETTER NOW, MY CHILD"**

He came to my desk with a quivering lip;
The lesson was done.
"Dear Teacher, my I have a new page?" he said,
"I've spoiled this one."
I took the old page, stained and blotted,
And gave him a new one, all unspotted.
And into his trouble eyes I smiled,
"Do better now, my child."

I went to the throne with a quivering soul;
The old year was done.
"Dear Master, may I have a new year?" I said,
"I've spoiled this one."
He took the old year, stained and blotted,
And gave me a new one, all unspotted.
And into my troubled soul, He smiled,
"Do better, now, my child."