

“We Have Not Passed This Way Heretofore”

By Everett Hardin

We have reached the end of the past year, and now we are entering a new year. Before crossing the Jordan River to the promised land beyond, the Israelites were told, “*ye have not passed this way heretofore*,” Josh. 3:4. Like these pilgrims of old, we have not traveled this road before. Where will this new road lead? We do not know all that will take place in our lives this year. No doubt, victories and rewards as well as dangers and defeats lie ahead. Like Israel, we proceed with divine encouragement. “*Be not afraid, neither be dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest*,” Josh. 1:9. If God was with them they would succeed. If God was not with them they would fail. There is no need for anyone to be discouraged in any situation so long as he has the promise of the presence of God to help him. As long as we conduct ourselves in such manner that God is pleased to be with us, we can accomplish in our lives everything that God intends for us to accomplish.

Seek the Old Paths

The course we follow in the new year should be determined after thoughtful deliberation. As we embark on this journey, we need to stand in the way “*and see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein*,” Jer. 6:16. It is foolish to go with the multitude without individual convictions of what is right, or to follow our own private impulses blindly and aimlessly. Other ways may seem smooth, pleasant, and flowery at the start, only to lose themselves in the pathless wilderness. We need to look to primitive Christianity, to the teaching of Christ and the apostles. We are to follow those old ways that are good; we are to build on the one foundation. The guidebook and divine map of the Great Designer can make our journey a safe and prosperous one. “*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*,” Psa. 119:105.

Faithfulness Required

The Lord does not promise us an easy time in His service. He promises to help and encourage us when we are weary, but He does not promise to steer us clear of all trials. But in the midst of these trials, He does demand that we be faithful. “*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life*,” Rev. 2:10. A soldier is not worth much to the Lord if he gives up in the heat of battle. The fearful retreating soldier gives the enemy comfort and encouragement. He also demoralizes other soldiers and his example takes away their courage and influences them to give up the battle. We must stay on the job, continuing to do right, in spite of hindering influences, in spite of persecution. We must “*lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us*” and “*run with patience the race that is set before us*,” Heb. 12:1. No doubt there will be mistakes, failures, and disappointments along the way. We must do our best to correct and overcome them. They must never deter us from the accomplishment of our mission. The crown of life goes to the faithful.

It may well be that we need to alter our course. We may need to make some serious changes. Where are we going? Where will the path we are following lead us? Are we on the path that leads to eternal life? We will never be able to travel over this same road again. Our obedience to God’s Word is the only way to ensure that our new year will be a happy one! Yes, those who accept and obey the Word of the Lord can be guaranteed a happy journey through the new year, and a blessed eternity in the future.

A new year lives before us! Three hundred and sixty five days in which to live, love, work, and play, if God wills. The beginning of a new year is a good time to pause and reflect, to examine and plan. As Christians, we are striving constantly to become better, more dedicated, and more effective servants of the Lord. To this end, may I suggest some New Year's resolutions each of us would do well to make.

1. To put first things first. Let every one of us who wears the name of Christ resolve that we are going to put Him first this year. A setting down of our priorities is most important in living the Christian life. If we truly "*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,*" as Jesus taught men to do, Matt. 6:33, other things can fit into their place, or be omitted, without great loss. And connected with the pledge to put first things first is the pledge to give more fully of ourselves, Rom. 12:1-2. Have you really put the kingdom of God first in the past year?

2. To be more spiritually minded. In the Colossians letter Paul wrote, "*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth,*" Col. 3:1-2. If we would be more spiritually minded, instead of more earthly minded, we must then set our mind on spiritual things. This requires study, 2 Tim. 2:15, prayer, I Thess. 5:17, regularly attendance with the saints, at times of assembled worship, and separating oneself from the filth of the world whether written, filmed, or live.

3. Study God's Word More this year. We are commanded, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,*" Col. 3:16, but how can this be if we never put the word of God in our hearts by diligent study? How much time do you devote to a study of God's Word? What more important use could a Christian make of his time than in studying the Scriptures "*which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,*" 2 Tim. 3:15?

4. That we will worship God on the occasions when the saints assemble, Acts 2:42; 20:7; Heb. 10:23-25. Are we putting God first if we allow vacation trips, visitors, relatives, TV, rest or work to keep us from assembling with God's people for worship? God has always required the best of our time, talents, and possessions. I owe encouragement and a good example both by word and conduct. This requires my presence at all services when possible. There are many scriptural reasons why Christians should be diligent to attend regularly every appointed period of public worship and Bible study.

5. Take advantage of opportunities. I suspect that most of us have opportunities of various kinds that we have let go by. We have probably missed opportunities to tell someone about Christ, and yet "*...he that winneth souls is wise,*" Prov. 11:30. Or maybe we could have helped to "*restore*" some erring brother, Gal. 6:1,2, or just an opportunity to "*do good*" to someone, Gal. 6:10, but we let it slip. We should resolve to take better advantage of opportunities. "*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil,*" Eph. 5:15-16. Redeeming the time simply means "buying up the opportunities."

6. Be more evangelistic minded. Each of us meet many individuals every day at work, at play, at school, in stores, etc., who are without Christ and His church and therefore are lost. Let us determine that we will make definite effort to rescue at least one soul from eternal ruin in 2018. What greater resolution than to seek to win some soul to Christ in this new year?

Joshua called upon the people, "*choose you this day whom ye will serve,*" Josh. 24:15. Jesus taught the urgency of using present opportunities, saying, "*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work,*" John 9:4. The Hebrew

writer said, "*Exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast until the end,*" Heb. 3:12-14. Let us therefore be obedient, diligent, and faithful in the service of the Lord.

The New Year is untried, it is abounding with new challenges from the Lord. No doubt it will be filled with difficult decisions requiring strength and maturity. With eternal values before us, and with the solemn knowledge that the Lord will judge all that we do, let us be careful and prayerfully serve the Lord. Determine to take advantage of every opportunity to bring glory to God. Let us make the New Year a fruitful one. This present life is the seedtime of an eternal harvest. "*In due season we shall reap if we faint not,*" Gal. 6:9. Our wish from our house to yours, is that you may put first things first all through this new year.
