

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

January 3, 2021

A New Year, A New Beginning!

The year 2020 has passed into the archives of history, never to be repeated. In many respects it was a very, very eventful year — a year which was tainted by the COVID-19 pandemic, a pandemic which shows no signs of relaxing its grip on the minds and lives of people throughout the world, a pandemic in which millions of lives were lost, a pandemic which has adversely affected the lives of people in every part of the world.

It seems that three words came into very common use in 2020 — “**masks**,” “**fear**,” and “**shutdown**.” In many places masks have been mandated, and some have been arrested for refusing to wear a mask. “**Fear**” has gripped the minds of millions; they are afraid to venture out into a public place, they are afraid of getting the virus; in fact, some are almost paranoid with fear! Businesses have been closed; schools have been closed; in some states people have been denied the privilege to assemble to study their Bibles and to worship God! For much of the nation, and the world at large, so many places and activities formerly deemed “essential” have been largely **shut down!** What a year!

But 2020 has passed; a new year has begun. Solomon counseled, saying, “*Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth*” (Prov. 27:1). Surely, if we do not know “*what a day may bring forth*,” we certainly do not know what a **year** may “*bring forth!*” However, we can pray, plan, and prepare in a manner whereby we can redeem “*the time*” (Col. 4:5), taking advantage of our opportunities to become better people, more fruitfully involved in the Lord’s work, and better examples to our families, fellow citizens, our neighbors, and people in general.

Jeremiah admonished the Jews, saying, “*Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord*” (Lam. 3:40). The apostle Paul encouraged the saints at Corinth, saying, “*Examine yourselves as to whether you be in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you are*

disqualified' (2 Cor. 13:5)

Yes, we need to “*examine*” our **ways**; we need to “*examine*” **ourselves**; we need to “*test*” ourselves, and then make the needed corrections. This is a time when countless people make their “new years’ resolutions,” but the very basis for making such “resolutions” involves our searching out and examining our ways, testing ourselves, discovering character flaws and defects, and then resolving to make the needed changes.

Resolutions are a good start! It has been stated that “people who make resolutions are ten times more likely to reach their goals.” C.S. Lewis said “you are never too old to set another goal, or to dream a new dream.” The apostle Paul described himself as “*forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,*” and then said “*I press toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:13-14). We should possess that same attitude and that same determination.

No doubt, each of us can make personal resolutions which would be peculiar to our own station and situation in life. But the following are some resolutions which all of us can make.

We urge you to “**resolve to:**” Spend more time in prayer. Correct personal flaws. Read the Bible on a daily basis. Assemble to worship God as often as physically able. Share the gospel with others. Be thankful for all blessings, both physical and spiritual. Make new friends. Spend time in genuine meditation. Stop procrastinating. Spread kindness. Give up all known vices. Stay Optimistic. Develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Seek “*first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matt. 6:33); Love righteousness and hate lawlessness (Heb. 1:9). Be “*conformed to the image*” of Christ (Rom. 8:29). “*Be holy*” even as God is holy (I Peter 1:16). “*Pray without ceasing*” (I Thess. 5:17).

Conclusion: More could be said by way of stating and emphasizing the importance of making proper resolutions, and then maintaining the resolve to follow through, but these are sufficient for making a good start. “The bottom line” is this: you know your both your good qualities and your character flaws (at least in part), so resolve to make those needed changes in your life and then prove by your actions that you were sincere when you made those resolutions. Hopefully, the end of 2020 found us better people than we were when the year began. Let us each **resolve** that we will be better people at the end of 2021 than we are now!

*** —B. Witherington

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1).