

A Better Resolution

A US News article indicates that 80 percent of New Year's resolutions do not last until the second week of February. Less than half of those active in May are ever completed. All surveys point out that resolutions are a fad seldom achieved. The number one thing about New Years Resolutions is that 93% of them do not work.

Some people resolve to give up a bad habit for the New Year. In the book *Immunity to Change*, authors Bob Keegan and Lisa Lahey report this observation. "In a study where cardiologists told their patients that they needed to stop smoking and lose weight or they would die, only one out of seven people made the change! That is almost 88% who did not make the change, even when faced with *death*." The question is, "What gets in the way of change?" Giving up anything requires a reason to change and the support of friends, fellow workers, and neighbors. Continued association with people that continue practicing the habit tends to inhibit change. For some, failing to accomplish the resolution causes them to have symptoms of depression and become demoralized. Instead of a resolution expecting instant change, a doctor may recommend making a long-range plan that uses small achievable steps rather than one giant leap.

Jesus, The Great Physician, gave a dire warning to the Jews and, by application, to us today. *"I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins"* (John 8:24). His diagnosis is that we will all die eternally if we fail to believe in Him. The beatitudes suggest a good "life-change" proposal in (Matthew 5:6) *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."* Many people consider this beatitude challenging and comforting. The challenge is righteousness. The first phase of this life-change is digesting the Word of God to learn *"The Righteousness of God"* (Romans 1:16-17). Then comes the application phase, living by the gospel as one's standard, *"approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15). The comfort derived from living by the gospel standard is the blessed peace that comes from the love and compassion of a loving Father and salvation from eternal death.

As a person begins to follow Christ, learn from Jesus, change the way and sometimes the means of living, long-range resolutions become clear. Learning to know, and love God, then someday live in heaven, is attained by a lifetime of study. *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15). Also, a person must obey God and live as He directs in His word (Ephesian 4:1-6:9; Romans 12:9-21).

Like forgotten resolutions, people stop following Christ because they are not committed to Him. Many people hunger and thirst for pleasure, prestige, position, possessions, and wealth instead of God's righteousness. Some people join a church because they seek friends and entertainment instead of seeking God and His Christ. But the attitude of individuals that look for the truth and salvation from sin and death in God's word is much different. The follower of Christ does not say, "I am here for entertainment"; but says, *"For me to live is Christ"* (Philippians 1:21)." When the gospel transforms one, they are dissatisfied with their old life and devoted to the new. They are like the Psalmist who said, *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?"* (Psalms 42:1-2). With that new attitude, many complete the resolve to follow Christ.

The Christian who hungers and thirsts for righteousness gradually grows in the Christian life. Unlike a New Years Resolution, this is a lifelong resolve that slowly turns one into a mature child of God. And a child of God has their name written in The Book of Life (Philippians 4:3). This beatitude also presents a paradox. The Christian is filled with the knowledge and peace of Christ yet continues to hunger and thirst. The more you learn of God and His Son, the more you want to know. And the Bible will keep you occupied for the rest of your life.

Confronted with the statements that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23) and "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23) should cause people to change. However, the trendy New Years Resolutions do not address this condition when discussing the changes or improvements people need. Eternal death is a subject that goes beyond the concerns of appearance, health, or physical self-improvement. It is one that addresses the current lifestyle and future existence of the individual. Romans' statements declare all people fall short of and are not acceptable to the one true God. To fall short of means to be separated from God and in desperate need to be restored to Him. Separated from God means lost forever in torment rather than life eternal with God and His Son.

Have you resolved to follow Jesus into eternal life?