

## WHAT WILL 1967 BE LIKE?

"In the beginning God ..." Genesis 1:1.

In the providence of God we stand at the beginning of another year. This is a splendid point from which to look back, to look within, and to look on. There are some things to which we never get accustomed, no matter how often they may be repeated. They thrill us every time they arrive. Always, right to the very end of life, when a new year comes to greet us, it evokes a certain response within the heart.

This new year dawns with great possibilities of faithful living and finer service. We are leaving behind the weaknesses and failures of the old year, and we are facing the new year with its unknown days and ways. We are facing the fact, the fear, the force, and the fascination of the future. We are starting the new year with purposes, plans, and anticipations, but we do not know an aught of fulfillment, realization, or certainty. We do not know what any day may bring forth. Quite likely we shall be introduced to duties, temptations, trials, and probably sufferings equal to or greater than any we have yet experienced.

The year we have left behind us has been filled with great events. It is entirely possible that the year upon which we entered this morning may be full of happenings of even greater significance in the march of human history. Only God, Who knows the end from the beginning, can foretell the story. Now that you have 1967 on your hands, what will you do with it? What will you make of it? What does it hold in store for you and me? What do you suppose 1967 will be like? It will be just what God and you and I make of it.

This journey into a new year means a new start for some of us. We have not lived for God and done as well as we should during the old year. Now we have a chance to make a new start. This means a new hope for some. We have dreamed that certain things would happen in the old year, but these dreams have not come true, so we will hold on to the hope that they will come true during this new year. This means new obligations for some. Maybe it means a new job, maybe it means new family responsibilities, maybe it means a new position to maintain. Perhaps you are resolving to carry these responsibilities more faithfully and more successfully in the coming year. Maybe it means a new life to live. It is a good time for all of us to turn over a new leaf and to write a new story on clean pages. May God help us to write well! For you this can be the very best year you have ever lived. If you will anticipate it as being your best year, if you will truly believe that it is possible for it to be your best year, if you will yield your life to Christ and go forward with Him in Christian service, then it can and will be the most glorious year you have ever lived.

What 1967 will be like for us depends, to a great extent, upon our reflection, our repentance, our resolutions, and our remembrances. It can be very profitable to us if we carefully and prayerfully consider these matters in this order.

### I. Reflection.

Another year has passed into the eternal records. What we did is done, and we cannot rewrite the story. The old year is beyond recall, with all of its failures, disappointments, accomplishments, and encouragements, and we must abide by the

consequences of our living during it. Many joys, opportunities, and sorrows have also passed with it. It is good for us to reflect on the past, but we should ask the Lord to save us from relying on the blessings and experiences of the days that have gone forever into the tomb of time.

When asked once what he would change in his life if he had it to live over, Lord Byron, evidently in one of his cynical moods, replied: "Nothing, unless not to have lived at all." But the great majority of people, who see beautiful and great possibilities in life, will have the grace and humility to confess that there has been much in their lives which they would like to change if they could live them over again. Happy indeed are those individuals who have discovered that the chief end in life is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, and who realize full well that nobody can turn back the stream of time or live any part of life over again. We have written indelibly on the old year, and no earthly eradicator can ever remove it.

## II. Repentance.

We know that man is never saved until he has repented of his sin and placed his faith in Christ. But there is also a repentance for the Christian. Repentance has brought the Christian into good standing with God. But he can sin and lose sweet fellowship with the Lord.

Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the evening, but, when they sinned, that sweet fellowship was broken, and we hear God saying, "Where are thou?" They were out of fellowship with God. You can be saved and yet lose the joy of salvation through sin. David committed a great sin, and later cried out, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." A Christian sins every day in thought, word, and deed. Therefore, he needs to come to God in penitence and ask for His forgiveness. We should not go to sleep at night until we have confessed our sins to God, and gotten everything right with Him. And surely we ought not to try to go through this new year until we have repented of all the wrongs that we have done in the old year.

You should repent of your sins. You remember when you stepped aside and did the things which were wrong in God's sight, and because you are a Christian you are not happy about it. When David sinned he kept still about it for a long time. But he couldn't pray effectively, and he wasn't happy. He said that his bones waxed old and that God's hand was heavy upon him. But when he broke the silence, when he cried out unto God, the floodgates were opened. He found his way back to God. Joy filled his soul and he wrote a psalm telling how happy a man can be when his sin is covered.

If you are a child of God and you commit sin, you are not going to have a clear conscience. You are going to be miserable until things are right between you and your Lord. If you can go on sinning and not feel any remorse of conscience, it just means that you have never known Christ as your Saviour or God as your Heavenly Father. If you have any sins between you and God, pull them out of your heart, confess them, forsake them, throw them away, and ask God to forgive you. He will do just that.

Repent of your neglect of duty. You may not have indulged in open and willful sin, but you have neglected your Christian duties. When Christ saved you, you promised that you

would be faithful to Him. You kept this vow for a while, then you let other things come into your life and you did not have room or time for Christ and His church. Christ went all the way for us, and He now calls upon us to be faithful to Him. Do not neglect to give your time and energies to Christ Who gave His life for us.

All Christians should repent of a wrong spirit or attitude toward others. Many Christians would not go to a place where they should not go, they would not think of drinking intoxicants, they would not indulge in profanity, and they would be furious if you accused them of stealing, but their hearts are filled with jealousy, envy, malice and hatred. Anyone who has such a spirit is just as guilty of sin as any thief or any immoral person. When there is something between you and someone else, there is something between you and God. How can any Christian go on with such a feeling in his heart and expect to receive and enjoy the blessing of God? If you leave this spirit and attitude in your heart, it will destroy your happiness and deprive you of all spiritual power. Get that wrong spirit out of your heart. The Lord will help and enable you to do it, if you really want it to go.

### III. Resolutions.

Let us look at a few of the resolutions which some of the Bible characters made.

#### 1. Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself.

When he was carried into captivity, he was placed in training to become one of the king's counselors. Not only his studies, but his food was prescribed by the king. He was required to eat pork and drink wine -- both of which were divinely forbidden. Rather than disobey God, he vowed that he would not eat the pork and drink the wine. He kept that vow, and became a great man in the kingdom. God blessed him because he made a resolution to live a holy life and then carried out his resolution. God will bless you if you will make a resolution to live for the Lord during the new year, and then do it.

#### 2. David made two resolutions.

##### (1) He resolved to read the Bible, and adopt it as a standard of life.

Many professing Christians read numerous other things with regularity, but are guilty of gross neglect in the important matter of reading the Bible. But here is David's resolution: "I will keep thy statutes. I will meditate in thy precepts and have respect unto thy ways. I will not forget thy word, I shall keep thy law, yea I shall observe it with my whole heart."

##### (2) David resolved to pray persistently.

David said, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live" (Psalm 116:2). David had many experiences with God and knew that He answered prayer. Therefore, he said that he was going to keep on praying as long as he lived. We know that the same God Who heard and answered the prayers of David hears and answers our prayers. And yet we fume and fret and worry instead of taking our burdens to the Lord and leaving them with Him.

3. Paul resolved that he would introduce others to Christ.

Paul said: "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Romans 1:14-15). What a marvelous thing it would be if you would resolve, with the Lord's help, to win somebody to Christ and to church membership during this year! It would mean a new life for the person whom you win to Christ, it would give you the greatest joy you have had since you were saved, and it would bring additional glory to Christ. I hope that when this year has passed into the tomb of time you will have won somebody to a saving knowledge of Christ.

4. You should make some good resolutions and put them into practice.

(1) Trust the Lord more implicitly.

He is altogether trustworthy. Even when we are faithless He abideth faithful. He will keep all of His promises and reward every trust. The measure of our faith will determine the measure of our blessings. Let us walk the pathway of unfaltering trust in our unchanging God and this year will be filled with blessings.

(2) Praise the Lord more heartily.

In the past we have grumbled too much and praised the Lord too little. Compare the amount of time which you spent in praising the Lord with the time which you spend in gossiping, grumbling, and criticising. We should praise the Lord more heartily because it is becoming for a Christian to do so; because it helps us when we do; and because it will attract others to Christ.

(3) Give to the Lord more sacrificially.

It is amazing how much we spend on ourselves and how little we spend on extending the kingdom of our Lord. In Old Testament times God demanded a tenth. Under grace He expects as much, and He deserves far more.

IV. Remembrances.

Let us remember:

1. That we can never repay Christ for all that He has done for us.

Christ went to the cross and died for our sins. He has given us every good thing that we have received. All of our hopes for the future are centered in Him. Therefore, let us do our very best for Him.

2. That the greatest happiness and the richest rewards come to those who are faithful to Christ.

If you will give Christ His rightful place in your life, this will truly be the best year you have ever had.

3. That this may be our last year.

This is an excellent reason why we should make it a good year in every way. The success of anything often depends on how it is started. There is only one correct way in which to start a new year and that is with Christ. William E. Gladstone, for many years British prime minister in the days of Queen Victoria, said: "It is a dangerous thing for any young man to start out in life without the thought of God." It is also a very dangerous thing for any individual to enter a new year without the thought of God, Who is the author of the years, and Who knows what each of the years holds.

Put your life into the hands of God and let Him take care of it and use it as He sees best. As you go through whatever portion of this new year that God may give you, remember that life will give back to you just what you give to life. If you want to know what 1967 is going to mean to you, you must decide on what you are going to mean to it. Life is fair and honest. It will give to you just what you give to it.

In the Rocky Mountains is a lake called Echo Lake. If you should stand by this lake and cry out something, the echo would give your words back to you just the way you would give them out. A couple stood by the lake, while on their honeymoon. The man shouted, "Get out of there, you bum." And the echo came back, "Get out of there, you bum" The woman was shocked. She said, "I'm ashamed of you. This scenery doesn't deserve such low talk." She suggested, "Let me say something to this glorious scenery." Then, in a beautiful soprano voice she sang, "Glory to God." And back from the mountain peak it came "Glory to God." You call out one thing, you get that back. You call out another thing and you get that back. Things happen to you according to what is within you. If the wrong thing is within you, then the wrong thing will happen to you. When a person is right within himself things come right -- maybe not without difficulty, but they come right. If he is wrong within himself, they come wrong. This is an issue all of us should face at the beginning of this new year. If you want 1967 to be a wonderful year, the best year you have ever had, and you want the years after that to be wonderful, you must be right within yourself -- otherwise things won't go right. Nothing that is wrong will ever go right. That is a fact. It is the way life is made. If you are wrong, life will be wrong. But, if you are right, life will be right. Get right with God. What life will bring to you in 1967 will depend upon your relationship to God and what you are within yourself. What you cannot do for yourself, God can do for you. That which is impossible with men is entirely possible with God. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."