



Happy New Year

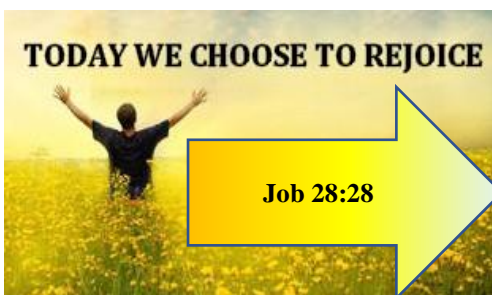
December 30, 2018

“The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. 11 Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath. 12 So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” (Psalm 90:10-12)

When you read this text from David, *“So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”* we think of the fact that each day is important, each day holds within the possibility of something great, and something terrible. We only know that we must make each day count, for the sake of our own salvation, and for the kingdom. The year of 2018 will soon be behind us and has merged with the eternal past. Every opportunity that we have neglected, is gone forever. Blessing of a new year is once again before us, not because of a new year, but a blessing or life and opportunity. Therefore, we ask: Will it be a year more devoted service towards God? Will it be a year of spiritual growth? What will my part in 2019 mean for the Lord, for His church here in Bedford? Will He see this assembly standing firm for the truth, or will our Lord see us, like the many, drifting into apostasy? These are questions that God already knows the answers to, for *“He declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done...”* (Isaiah 46:10).

But for you and I, only when the future becomes the past will we know it for certain. Looking back, I am reminded, of the words of Joshua, as he was giving the children of Israel instructions prior to leading them across the river Jordan and into the land promised of God. The priest and the Levites would carry the ark of the covenant, but Joshua said, *“Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before”* (Josh. 3:3-4).

David’s words, inspired of God, teach us our lives are very brief, that regardless of the years we are blessed with, be it 70 or by reason of strength, 80, our life is still comparatively short. You young people ask your grandparents, or anyone who has lived out their allotted span and they will tell how rapidly the years have come and gone. I can tell you that in years past that thousands of times I have driven by different cemeteries without even a thought or notice. Now I notice every

 <p>TODAY WE CHOOSE TO REJOICE</p> <p>Job 28:28</p>	<p><i>“And to man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.”</i></p>
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single one, and a deep sense of my mortality comes over me every time. And so, in view of the brevity of life, David said, *“Teach us to number our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom.”* O’ how much we need to heed the admonition of David. Time is a precious commodity and should never be wasted. Benjamin Franklin said, **“If time is of all things most precious, then wasting time is the greatest prodigality.”** How true! The Bible overflows in expressions that teach us of the briefness and the uncertainty of life. Job said, *“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope”* (Job 7:6). David said, *“As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes”* (Psalms 103:15). Jesus told of a certain rich man whose land brought forth so plentifully that he had no place to store his abundance of goods. Then he thought of a plan. He said, *“Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ 18 So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’” 20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’”* (Luke 12:16-20). God called this man a fool. Why? From the divine standpoint there were several reasons for calling him foolish. He was unthankful for his blessings. In fact, there is no acknowledgment on his part that God had given him his bountiful harvest. Then too, he left God out of his plans for the future. Further, he had a false security. He seemed to think that his riches would supply everything he needed. But another, and perhaps his greatest mistake, is seen in his use of the expression, *“for many years.”* He thought that he had a long-term lease on life. And how mistaken he was! Already death was knocking at his door. God said, *“Fool! This night your soul will be required of you”*.

Yet many make the same mistakes today as they did yesterday, and live as if they always have tomorrow to work, to serve to grow spiritually, and to live. Believing there is always tomorrow, never heeding the clear warnings of inspiration and the events of history which remind us just how uncertain life is. James is very pertinent as he said, *“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that”* (James 4:13-15). Life is like that autumn fog that hangs out in the early morning and quickly disappears with the rising sun. One moment we see it, the next moment it has disappeared from our view. Therefore, don’t think about a new year, but each and every day. Solomon advises, *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going”* (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The Bible lays considerable emphasis upon making the proper use of and the most use of the time that God has given us. Jesus, himself, set an example along this line. *“I [a] must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work”* (John 9:4). Notice in your Bibles, the [a]. This is there because most texts, and even most translations read, “We”, and not “I”. Greek word is hēmas [ἡμᾶς] which is translated “Us or We”. Don’t leave the work to others for soon will come the dark night of death, and our unfinished tasks goes others. Once this life is over, it is over forever.

Statistics sometimes reveal things, which are cause for grave concern. Let me share some statistics from an article I read some time ago in which the writer gave a breakdown of the average life of 75 years and the amount of time spent in various activities. The facts presented were as follows: Five years spent surfing the internet - Three years spent in education (Just because you're in school doesn't mean you're learning) - Eight years spent in amusements - Six years spent at the meal table - Five years spent in transportation - Four years spent in conversation - Fourteen years spent in work - Three years spent in reading - Twenty-four years spent in sleeping and three years spent in sickness. These figures only represent an average, but they are telling, and notice that time spent in worship was not included in these statistics. The reason is because as the article further pointed out that if one spends an hour in church service each week, in a lifetime of 75 years it will amount to about five months." Think of it! 75 years our life is spent in non-spiritual pursuits and only five months of our life given to God.

So, 2018 is soon just a memory, as 2019 lies ahead. We cannot change the past, we can only hope to make the best use of future opportunities. Lord, teach us to number our days. We can study our Bible each day (2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18). We can commit to teaching others about Christ – (2 Timothy 2:2). We can be faithful in attending all assemblies regularly – (Heb. 10:25; John 12:48). We can truly give as we have been prospered (1 Cor. 16:2). Finally, we can do more to help those in need – (2Cor. 8-9; Gal. 6:10). Many of us are blessed with such abundance We may not be rich in one sense, but we do not suffer. Let us purpose to be our brother's keeper.

Of course, "resolutions" are not worth the time it takes to think about them if we do not zealously work to carry them out. Resolve, pray, and work!

To those who wish to make 2019 a better year, we commend the words of the apostle Peter, recorded in 1 Peter 3:10-11: *"He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it"*

As the people of God, serving him in his eternal kingdom, *"Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"* (Gal. 6:9).

In Love

David Scarpino

