

Writing the Next Chapter

The beginning. The starting point. Square one. Call it what you will, we are on the threshold of another new year. To the Lord, January 1st is just another day. To us, it represents a fresh chapter of our lives. This chapter may contain 365 days as most of the others in our lives have, or it may be shortened by our departure from this world. As in most of the previous chapters of our lives, this one will be filled with lines of joy as well as lines of sorrow. Each day in the coming year will open with a blank page and close with a record of our deeds. How will you and I write our chapter in this next year?

We can sit back and pledge and resolve all we want on the first day of the new year, but many a good intention has died before it sees the light of day. When the previous New Year's Day dawned, how many of us committed to self-improvement in what has now become the year that has passed? How many of us said we were going to read the Bible through? How many of us determined to bring even a single soul to Christ? How many of us made a resolution to be stronger in faith and closer to God? As we reflect on the year gone by, what do we see in that chapter? Did we achieve what we set out to accomplish? Do the pages show that we exceeded our goals or are too many of the 365 pages mostly devoid of entries regarding our service to God?

Now a new year is upon us. We get to try again. What will make this year different than the others? What will spur us to take our intentions of spiritual greatness and convert them into actions? Will it be a sense of urgency, a realization that we are now closer to eternity than we ever have been? Paul wrote, "it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." (Romans 13:11). What will prompt us to get more involved in the Lord's work in the year ahead? Will it be a deeper compassion for lost souls? Jesus, looking compassionately at the lost and seeing them as scattered sheep without a shepherd, said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38). What will lead us into deeper study of God's Word and more time in reverent prayer? Will it be a more intense love for God? What will lift us above fear and doubt and propel us to stronger and more effective faith? What will cause us to stand up and speak up for that which is right? What will provoke us to rise up against Satan, convinced of the truths that "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4) and "if God be for us, who can be against us" (Romans 8:31)? What will it take to get us to be the leaders and influence for good that God wants us to be?

So here it is. It's a new day. It's a new year. It's a new chapter. It's a blank page. Start writing and may you write in such a way that at the conclusion of your life's book, you will see this final entry penned by the Lord Himself: "Well done, good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matthew 25:23).

Mike Gifford
Gifford7777@yahoo.com