**NEW YEARS MESSAGE**

**2018**

**There’s nothing wrong with celebrating the new-year. In some ways it gives us a sense of starting over or having another chance to do things better.**

**There is also a sense of recognizing the brevity of life. The book of James helps us to remember that God gives us no more than a day at a time; there is no guarantee that we will be on this earth for another year, month, week or even a day.**

***James 4:13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."***

***14) Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.***

***15) Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that."***

**Vs. 13 – There’s nothing wrong with making plans but this illustration leaves the Lord out of it.**

**Vs. 14 – This is a reminder that God has a plan for each of us and He is control, not us.**

**Vs. 15 – This reflects an attitude of one who is grace oriented.**

**Consider the following:**

***Proverbs 16:9 The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.***

**“Man proposes, God disposes” Man meditates and prepares his plans, but it rests with God whether He shall carry them to completion or not and what the level of difficulty or ease will be.**

**So what should our attitude be as we face a new year?**

***Psalm 1* *is a practical psalm*. *It introduces us to the way in which we may find happiness and fulfillment in life. It is by meditation on and delight in the law of God* [Bible doctrine]*.*** James Montgomery Boice, Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 14.

**Psalm 1 reminds us of Robert Frost’s use of the idea of two choices in the poem “The Road Not Taken.”**

***Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —***

***I took the one less traveled by,***

***And that has made all the difference.***

**The book of Matthew, like the first Psalm, gives us an example of the two choices before us:**

***Matthew 7:12-14 "Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.***

***13) "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it.***

***14) "For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.***

***Psalm 1:1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!***

***Charles Spurgeon said, “When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse. At first they merely walk in the counsel of the careless and ungodly, who forget God—the evil is rather practical than habitual—but after that, they become habituated to evil, and they stand in the way of open sinners who willfully violate God’s commandments; and if let alone, they go one step further, and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others, and thus they sit in the seat of the scornful. They have taken their degree in vice, and as true Doctors of Damnation they are installed.”*** James Montgomery Boice, Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 16.

***2) But his delight is in the law* [word] *of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.***

***When we study the Bible—the word law is used to refer to the whole of God’s inscripturated revelation—we are really learning, not about human beings or nature primarily (which is what the other disciplines teach us), but about God.*** *ibid*

***Psalm 37:4-5 Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. 5) Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.***

***Psalm 145:18-19 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. 19) He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.***

***Psalm 77:12 I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. 13) Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?***

***Psalm 143:5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.***

***Meditation involves studying a passage of Scripture, memorizing it, praying about it, and exhorting oneself to fulfill it.*** *Ted Cabal et al., The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 789.*

***Psalm 42:5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence.***

***3) And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.***

**A tree that is planted by a stream, so that it can sink its roots down and draw nourishment, it will prosper and yield fruit.**

**The believer who draws spiritual nourishment from God’s word will prosper in whatever he does.**

***The promise of prosperity is qualified by the context: “whatever he does” will be determined by living in obedience to the Scriptures—that is what will prosper.*** Ted Cabal et al., The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 789.

**Those who delight in the Word of God do not wither but instead produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit.**

***4) The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.***

***The wicked are like chaff in two senses. Chaff is worthless, and chaff is burned. This pictures the futile, empty, worth- less life of* [*those who* are indifferent to God and His word].***ibid*

***Most believers have believed the lie that religious people never have any fun. The wicked say that life is short so the only way to get the most from it is to get on the fast track of sin, do whatever feels good. They say, “If it feels good, do it.”***

***They don’t realize that sin never satisfies those who are enslaved by it.***

***Rom. 8:7 … the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.***

***The contrast between the two ways may be put like this. It is the difference between those who are in love with sin and those who love God. The first class love sin’s ways and follow it. The second love God and seek him in Scripture, where he may be found.***

***In Eden, the devil told Eve that if she disobeyed God by eating of the forbidden tree, her eyes would be “opened” and she would be like God (Gen. 3:5)... but she did not become like God; she became like Satan.*** *ibid*

***5) Therefore the wicked (ungodly) will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.***

**The wicked are not always those who commit crime and heinous acts; there are those who are self-righteous and legalistic who also will not stand in the judgment because they stubbornly assert that they are in good standing with God because of their works.**

***Proverbs 30:12 There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, Yet is not washed from his filthiness.***

***Prov. 14:12 - There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.***

***Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.***

**The Bible promises that the wicked/sinners, both antinomian and legalistic types, will receive judgment from God.**

***Psalm 104:35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth, And let the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD!***

***Psalm 145:20 The LORD keeps all who love Him; But all the wicked, He will destroy.***

***6) For the LORD knows the way of* [approves of or has regard for] *the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish* [be destroyed, come to naught]*.***

**The end result is that we all are responsible for the choices we make and we will either regret them or be delighted with them.**

***Deuteronomy 30:15 See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity;***

***16) in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it.***

***17) "But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them,***

***18) I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You shall not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it.***

***19) "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,***

***20) by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."***