

Remnant Life Church
Sunday, December 27, 2020
Resolutions Born in Wisdom
Zephaniah 3:12-17

There are many ways that time is measured

- From the watches we wear and phones we carry
- To calendars that tells us the month and day of the week at a glance
- Many of us could not function without our planners
- But calendars did not just appear – they went through many variations before becoming what we use today

The birth of the calendar

- Once the movement of the sun and moon was understood to be constant, they became the first ways that time was measured
 - Then, on a broader scale, it was the seasons of the year
- The earliest written calendars were thought to be in use 2 to 3,000 years before the birth of Jesus in the bronze age by the Egyptians and Sumerians
- In the iron age that followed, the Babylonians used a variation of those earlier models
- It was then the Roman calendar that became the standard as finalized by Julius Caesar

The Julian Calendar, established in 45 BC, would be used for the next 1600 years

- In 1582 Pope Gregory XII decreed that the method of tracking the months and dates would be changed to what would become known as the Gregorian Calendar which is what we use today
- The primary reason for the change was that the length of the year was inaccurate in relation to the tropical year or seasons (specifically the spring equinox)
 - Since the church used those dates for the celebration of Easter and other fixed holy days, they could not have a calendar where the date changed from year to year
- Interestingly, when the final year the Julian calendar was used in 46 BC, just before the Gregorian calendar was implemented, that last year was made 445 days long to “make up” the days needed to be to better align it with the seasons

To the Hebrew people of the Bible, there were two critical components above all others that were used when considering the calendar

- The first were the annual feasts as established by God through Moses
- The second were the seasons for planting and harvesting crops

We are now on the cusp of turning the calendar year over yet again as we prepare to enter 2021.

- We are all hoping that this new year will be significantly different (read that better) than the old
- And as individuals, it provides for us a starting point to consider changes in our own lives

Most people engage in 2 activities this time of year – reflection and resolution

- First, a caution about spending too much time in reflection
 - You can do nothing about what was done, only so much as to learn from those things, good and bad, to either incorporate the good or remove the bad from your life
 - But you cannot allow your past to become the focus of your mind and heart
 - Satan wants nothing more than for you to dwell on your past failures or difficulties in order to rob you of your peace and your trust in God
- But resolutions need to be born out of wisdom, not made on a whim or out of desperation
 - Do not make them overly aggressive
 - For instance you should never make a resolution that requires an immediately, drastic change
 - Why?
 - Because, as before, Satan wants you to fail to bring discouragement
 - One other thing, when considering what things you should change in the year to come do not try and determine those on your own
 - What you think should be changed is most likely not the most important thing or of the highest priority
 - It is almost for certain that you do not know what those important things are
 - They are called blind spots for a reason
 - Ask one or two (no more) to help you identify things that need to be dealt with
 - Give them (and yourself) permission to be honest without repercussion
 - Next, pray about what God would have you focusing on in the year to come

How can resolutions be made in wisdom?

READ - Zephaniah 3:12-17

Zephaniah was a prophet in the time of King Josiah, the last godly king to rule Judah

- In these words of the last chapter, Zephaniah is sharing with the people God's plan to redeem the nations after they have been purified of their unrighteousness
 - He also gives us a wonderful blueprint in the 12th and 13th verses of components needed for resolutions that will purify and position us, not only to give glory to God, but also receive His blessings
1. **3:12** – Meek and humble – humility instead of pride
 - a. The Bible speaks of humility nearly 90 times but warns against the spirit of pride twice as much
 - b. **Prov. 18:12** - *Before his downfall, a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor*
 - c. The root cause of virtually all failures in our lives is pride

- i. As you consider this coming year, and what needs to change, are you willing to let someone else tell you what they see?
 - ii. Only in humility will you be able to accept that
 - iii. Most responses that are in pride... "I don't think that's a problem for me"
 - iv. Or excuses are made with justifications
 - v. Being humble and meek is the posture of trust

- 2. **3:12** – Trust in the name of the Lord
 - a. Trust is only seen in its fullest within the freedom of humility
 - b. **Prov. 3:5** -*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;*
 - c. Why is my own understanding so untrustworthy
 - d. Because it is the flesh nature and that is what separates us from God

- 3. **3:13** – Speak no lies
 - a. Truth is not only in what you say but what you think
 - b. Jesus said in **Matt 15:18** - *But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart,*
 - c. We spent 2 months this fall talking about servanthood and how that begins in the heart
 - d. So do the words that we say
 - e. Not in the mind, but the heart

- 4. **3:13** – Eat and lie down
 - a. Know that God will take care of you
 - b. **Phil. 4:19** - *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*
 - c. This is an assurance that comes from trusting God
 - d. Satan wants you to doubt – just as he has tried to do since the beginning with Adam and Eve (**Gen 3:1**)
 - i. He asked them, did God really tell you not to eat of the tree?
 - ii. He tried to get Jesus to doubt in the wilderness temptation
 - iii. If you are the Son of God...
 - e. This is why we trust in God and God alone

- 5. **3:13** – Do not be afraid
 - a. **Psalm 27:1-3** *The LORD is my light and my salvation--whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life--of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.*
 - b. Fear has been the common theme of much of what we have looked at together since March
 - i. Do not be afraid!
 - ii. The Psalmist asks the right questions when he writes...

- iii. The LORD is my light and my salvation--whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life--of whom shall I be afraid?*
- c. In 1933, FDR spoke a line in his first inaugural address that served as an encouragement to the people of the United States in a very difficult time nationally
- i. The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself*
- d. For you and for me in the year 2021, some 87 years later, it is not fear that we should fear, but any moment in our lives without the presence of almighty God

And so in these two verses there are six fundamental blessings promised to us as the remnant that refuses to compromise, refuses to buckle to the pressure of a godless culture, and refuses to deviate from the perfect Word of God:

1. Blessing of Humility - the meek and humble; exalted by God
2. Blessing of Refuge – when we trust in the name of the Lord
3. Blessing of Integrity – speak no lies; without deceit
4. Blessing of Provision – you will eat
5. Blessing of Peaceful Rest – and lie down
6. Blessing of Security – no one will make you afraid

Are you planning on making resolutions this year?

- You should consider those things in your life that need to change
- Remaining the same in areas of your life that are not healthy or continually fail is foolish
- But it is not just a shot in the dark, hopeful, guess that is going to succeed
- It is those things that are led by the Spirit to bring you more into of God's plan for your life

Reflection – only for a short time to see what can be learned

Resolutions – take on only those brought through a heart of humility to the glory of God