

Intentions Won't Get It

by Dee Bowman

Some of the proverbial expressions not found in the Bible are nonetheless true. Truth will always plumb with all other truth; it cannot contradict itself. Take the expression “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” That ‘s not in the scriptures, but I fear it’s true nonetheless. Nobody that I’ve ever heard of really wants to go to hell; and everybody I know intends to do something about not making that trip. But when? That’s the question.

“I intend to be more diligent.” Diligence is necessary to progress in spiritual living. You can’t just sit around and become spiritual. Furthermore, it doesn’t come by some process of osmosis—or just because you are in close proximity to a Bible, or to others who believe it and are involved in it. Diligence is a personal, willful action: you decide to do it. In the NKJV, 2 Tim. 2:15 says, “Give diligence to present yourself approved to God.” The word translated diligence is from a Latin word which means to give earnest persistence to a matter. The Greek word means both an earnest zeal and a burning haste to get it done. You can’t just sit around and be still be diligent.

Peter tells us something about diligence when he uses that same term to describe what have been styled “The Christian Graces” in 2 Peter 1. “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self control, to self control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” You don’t add those things up in your mind and you’re through—it’s a life-long pursuit. And it all begins with the decision to get on with the project. That means you develop a serious conviction and a pressing urgency to the need to add all those things to your life. Intentions won’t get it; it takes work.

“I intend to get involved.” When? And what’s wrong with today? Intentions won’t get it, folks. You can only get involved when you participate with someone in something, become a part—a working part. The “someone” is other brethren and the “something” is the work you’ve decided to do together. Paul speaks of joint participation in Romans 12: “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” We’re individuals who are melded together in the fight against sin and ungodliness. And we’re together in our common worship of the Father, in our desire to bring others to Him. We’re together, and being together takes work, patience, understanding; and it takes time. But it doesn’t just happen. It’s a planned action. Intentions don’t work, folks.

“I intend to tell somebody.” I seriously doubt that anybody is going to heaven alone. You will go with someone and you will take someone. Just as somebody loved us enough to

tell us about the Lord and His salvation, it's up to us to pass it on. Not just intend to, mind you, but to do it. Everybody intends to talk to their family, to their neighbor, but that won't get it. You have to run the risk. And if you lose a friend over it, it's no more than what the Lord did.

"As many as were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" we are told in Acts 8:4. Not just the preachers, not just the elders, but "as many as were scattered." Everybody has the responsibility to pass on the message of the risen Savior and His salvation. It may be that the great deficiency of the church in this age is the failure of its members to get involved in teaching others. Oh, they intend to. But intentions won't get it, folks.

And you don't have to be a Bible scholar to teach the word. All you need is a note pad and a knowledge of the scriptures broad enough to tell someone what you did to be saved. Following the great commission in Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." What did He just command? "Go therefore and teach all nations," that's what. Maybe you intend to do it but you don't have the ability? Then help someone else do it. Be a part. One thing is certain: it needs to be told. And intentions won't get it done; you have to get on with it.

When it's all said and done and you stand before the bar of judgment, can you say to the Lord, with a clear conscience, "Lord, I intended to?"