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“We Have Not Passed This Way Heretofore”

By Everett Hardin

We have reached the terminus of the long miles of the past year, and now we are entering a new highway. This is a new road. Before crossing the Jordan River to the promised land beyond, the Israelites were told, *“Ye have not passed this way heretofore,”* (Josh. 3:4). Standing on the threshold of the unexplored regions of the new year, like those pilgrims of old, we have not traveled this road before. Where will this new road lead? We do not know all that will take place in our lives this year. No doubt, victories and rewards, as well as dangers and defeats, lie ahead. Like Israel, we can proceed with divine encouragement. *“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage: be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with the whithersoever thou goest”* (Josh. 1:9). If God was with them they would succeed. If God was not with them they would fail. There is no need for anyone to be discouraged in any situation so long as he has the promise of the presence of God with him. As long as we conduct ourselves in such a manner that God is pleased to be with us, we can accomplish in our own lives everything that God intends for us to accomplish. How can we have a Happy New Year?

Seek The Old Paths

The course we should follow in the New Year should be determined by thoughtful deliberation. As we embark on this journey, we need to *“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for our souls”* (Jer. 6:16). It is foolish to go with the multitude without individual convictions of what is right or to follow our impulse blindly or aimlessly. Our ways may seem smooth, pleasant and flowery at the first, only to lose ourselves in the pathless wilderness. We need to look to primitive Christianity, in the teaching of Christ and the apostles. We are to follow those old ways that are good, we are to build on the one foundation (I Cor. 3:11). The guidebook and divine map of the Great Designer can make our journey a safe and prosperous one, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”* (Psa. 119:105).

Faithfulness Is Required

The New Year will be a time for us to grow, a time to increase in strength and service. The Lord does not promise us an easy way in His service. He promises to help and encourage us when we are tired, but He does not promise to steer us clear of all trials. But in the midst of these trials He does demand that we be faithful. *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10). A soldier is not worth much to the Lord, if he gives up in the heat of battle. The fearful, retreating soldier gives the enemy comfort and encouragement. We must stay on the job continuing to do right, in spite of hindering influences, in spite of persecution. We must *“lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us”* (Heb. 12:1). No doubt there will be mistakes, failures, and disappointments along the way. We must do our best to correct and overcome them. They must never deter us from the accomplishment of our mission. We must be *“steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”* (I Cor. 15:58). The crown of life goes to the faithful!

Redeem The Time

Specific occasions of opportunity within one's life are many, but they are brief and fleeting. *"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil"* (Eph. 5:15-16). We must make the best of our opportunities. This we can be assured of: 2022 will come only once! We will never be allowed to travel through it again. We will be powerless to turn back the clock, rewind the day, recall a minute, or live again one second once it is past. The law governing time is irrevocable, and time moves silently and swiftly onward. God placed time at man's disposal, and holds him accountable for the use he makes of it. Every golden moment of our wakeful hours present a challenge because it offers an opportunity. The passing of years only adds acceleration to the fleeting days, weeks, months, and years. We should meet the challenges of 2022 with courage and high hopes. *"The days of our years are threescore and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength, labor, and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away"* (Ps. 90:10).

Forget The Past And Look Ahead

Paul had given up all things for Christ and counted them as refuse to be turned away from. *"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung that I might win Christ"* (Phil. 3:8). Cluttering up the present failures of the past will rob you of today's radiance. A backward look may bring sorrow or joy. No mistake of the past, no matter how great, should cause us to lose hope or effort for a better tomorrow and fewer mistakes. Only the person who has lost hope of improvement considers himself as having failed. The failures of the past should become lessons for the future. How do we succeed in putting away the past? God offers cleansing of any sins of the past. *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isa. 1:18). To dig up forgiven sins causes a loss of moral enthusiasm and apostasy.

Lay Hold Of The Future

Paul said, forgetting the things which are behind, *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:14). Paul moves from the past to the present. He considered such things as Jewish descent, strictness regarding the Law, and zeal in persecuting the church, a loss for the sake of Christ. Paul continues the metaphor of the runner in a race pressing forward toward the finish line (I Cor. 9:24-27). The runner keeps his eyes on the mark at the end of the race. *"If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above...Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Col. 3:1-2). The reason we should strenuously press forward in the Christian life is for the prize that can be won at the end of the race. We should determine to succeed; a pessimist or defeatist is a misfit. Set your goal in life and be determined to reach it. Simply tackle your duty to God and to others, and be determined to succeed. Most of all, plan a life in obedience to God. This is the greatest of all achievements!

The Eternal Reward

One of the gravest thoughts entertained, as we stand on the threshold of a new year, is that every thought and deed is being recorded in an eternal record which none can re-write! No combined efforts of men or devils can alter God's ledger or erase one error, nor shall the passing of the ages obliterate one defeat. How careful we should be that every thought, word, and deed be in harmony with the revealed will of God. God is recording all our works, and in the judgment

it will be what is recorded in the “books” that will determine our destiny. *“I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things written in the books, according to their works”* (Rev. 20:12).

It may very well be possible that we need to alter our course. We may need to make some serious changes. Where are we going? Where will the path we are following lead us? Are we on the path that leads to life eternal? Our obedience to God’s Word is the only way to ensure that our new year will be a happy one. Yes, those who accept and obey the Word of the Lord can be guaranteed a happy journey through this new year, and a happy eternity in the future. Let us make this new year the best year of our life starting today! May God grant that each of us will have the kind of year that will draw us closer to Him, that we may lean more dependently upon Him for comfort and consolation which is found only in Christ Jesus our Lord. And may the new year find new resolutions within each of us that will lead to a new dedication of life.

The past is gone. The present and the hope of the future are the only things that remain. Don’t let another year go by without getting right with God! If you continue in sin, one of these days what you could have had will only be a painful memory. Plan to live each day as if it were your last day on earth, for indeed it could be!
