

God's Resolution for You!

Only a third of us will make the traditional New Year's Resolution this year. Midnight strikes and we vow to lose twenty pounds; midnight strikes, and we vow to rise an hour earlier to exercise; midnight strikes, and we vow to master some new work skill. We promise ourselves we will give up chocolate, TV, fats, or carbs and then suddenly realize a whole year of doing without stretches out ahead of us. Our resolutions always tend to push the limits of our abilities, testing the strength of our self-denial. No wonder resolution-making is falling by the wayside. The tradition of making New Year's resolutions dates to the early Babylonians. They too tended towards the pragmatic and responsible side of resolutions, most often resolving to return borrowed farm equipment. But what if we looked at the New Year as a sea of possibilities, instead of an ocean of responsibilities? What if we resolved to relax more, sleep more, sing more, and play more? What if instead of insisting that we drop ten pounds we look to add five new friends or reclaim five old friends? What if we resolved to be more of what we can be, instead of resolving just to be less of what we already are and feel like a failure?

In Jeremiah 30 and 31 the prophet looks forward to a new day. He proclaims a glorious vision. Instead of one of his usual doom-gloom/look-how-bad-you've-been reports, Jeremiah offers a sneak peek into a future that's filled with promise and hope: the new restoration of Israel, the redemption of the people, a return to the land Yahweh had given them. A life of abundance in all things is the divine promise. An abundant life is God's resolution for all of God's beloved. In this new beginning proclaimed by Jeremiah, it's God who makes the resolutions: "God resolves, Jeremiah announces, to fill the people's bellies with grain, wine, oil, and meat. God resolves to make their lives so lush they will be like a watered garden. God resolves that their feet will dance, their voices will sing, and their hearts will be merry. God's resolve for all the people is that they will be satisfied, or even sated, with the largesse of divine bounty." Although most of Jeremiah's prophetic life had gazed back over the long history of Israel's failures, her sins, and her shortcomings, as the Babylonians finally approached the gates of Jerusalem Jeremiah turned his gaze forward and saw the new possibilities that time would offer to Israel.

A new year offers us a unique vantage point - a place from which we can stand at the threshold of time and look back upon the old year and forward into the new yet-to-be year that awaits us. What if Christians were to celebrate the New Year by letting God make the resolutions, both about your past and your future: With regards to your past: God resolves to forgive your sins, blot out your transgressions, and help you accept your acceptance and embrace the memory of the past with gratitude and grace. Why not confess your sin and receive God's Amazing Grace? In regard to your future: God resolves to guide your path as a "lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your path." God resolves to give you the direction and diligence, courage, and caution you need to move forward with faith and foresight. God resolves, in the words of Jeremiah, to fill your bellies with good food, to shower your life with good friends and feelings until it becomes like a watered garden until your feet will dance, your voices will sing, and your hearts will be merry. At the stroke of midnight, as 2022 ends and 2023 begins, we can go merrily into the New Year because God resolves to go behind us and ahead of us in all we do for His glory.