

New Year's Day Sermon: 12 Resolutions for 2006 for Faithful Ministry

1. introduction

1.1. Text: 2 Tim 2

1.2. Introduction

1.2.1. Our Theme this year is "The Abundant Life"

1.2.2. but before we actually deal with this, I wanted to first Challenge us about the New Year

- I used to grow up thinking that making New Year's Resolutions was bad, people ultimately fail to keep them
- until I realised that the Lord wants us to be setting SPIRITUAL GOALS for ourselves and to be aiming for them
- some people's resolutions are like this one I found (Illus: Weight Loss Resolution)

1.2.3. What I would like to do today is to look at some Realistic Resolutions that we can make for this New Year to help us be better men & women of God

1.3. Outline: 12 Resolutions for 2006 for Faithful Ministry

1.3.1. In Personal Testimony

- Be a Strong in God's Grace v.1
- Be a Faithful Model and Mentor v.2

1.3.2. In Personal Discipline

- Be a Tough & Focused Soldier v.3
- Be as Disciplined as a Sportsman v.5
- Be as Patient as a Farmer v.6
- Be Full of Endurance v.9-10

1.3.3. In Personal Growth

- Be Dead to the World v.11
- Be a Diligent Student v.15
- Be an Approved Workman v.15

1.3.4. In Personal Service

- Be Holy v.19
- Be a Gentle Servant & Teacher v.24
- Be in the Will of God v.26

2. In Personal Testimony

2.1. Be a Strong in God's Grace v.1

2:1* ¶ Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2.1.1. we are COMMANDED to be STRONG

- this is a command, not a suggestion
- it means - to be made strong or to INCREASE in STRENGTH
- this year, we need to be INCREASING in our strength

2.1.2. this is not something that we can do ourselves

- many of us fail in this dept without getting past the first week of the New Year because we are doing this by our Own Strength
- there is no way in which you can do that on your own, but foolishly, many of us keep trying it again and again - and FAIL

Ga 3:3* Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

- it took the grace of God to save us and it will take the Grace of God for us to Grow in Maturity in Christ

2.1.3. Make a Resolution for 2006 that you want to BE STRONG for Jesus Christ

- the only way you can do this is to do it IN the GRACE of Christ Jesus ie. by turning to Him for Divine Help
- we can succeed if we are fighting our spiritual battles IN His Strength, not in our own

2.1.4. IF you have been defeated over and over again and are Discouraged, my Challenge to you this morning is to GIVE UP on your strength

- and start LEARNING about God's Strength and God's Grace that He desires for you to possess in this life
- and start to DEPEND 100% on His Grace instead of just some of it

2.2. Be a Faithful Model and Mentor v.2

2* And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

2.2.1. I believe the scriptures tell us here that God wants us to be Models AND Mentors to others

- that we need to dedicate ourselves this year to Learning and Walking with someone more MATURE than us
- but not only that, but to be able to DO the SAME for someone else

2.2.2. Let me challenge you today that you can't do this unless you yourself have been FAITHFUL in LISTENING

- faithful in church attendance and the PREACHING of God's Word
- faithful in attending to the TEACHING of God's Word

2.2.3. We see that God's AGENDA for Growth in the Local Church

- is simply through the continuous process of DISCIPLESHIP

- at any single moment, we are both disciples of someone and mentors to someone else

2.2.4. Make it a Resolution this year that you will

- be Faithful in attending to the Teaching & Preaching of God's Word
- that you will be an Example to others
- that you will be a Teacher to someone else
- perhaps the Lord wants you to Disciple someone this year, don't delay - make time to do so

2.3. So we see that one of the very First Things that the Lord wants us to Settle this year is our TESTIMONY

2.3.1. I would like to point out that this isn't optional, but something ESSENTIAL because God has CALLED every believer to be a Good WITNESS

1Ti 6:12* Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto **thou art also called**, and hast **professed a good profession** before many witnesses.

2.3.2. this is not for display, but to be a faithful witness to the Lost

Tit 1:9* Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been **taught**, that he may be able by sound doctrine **both to exhort** and **to convince** the gainsayers.

2.4. the Reason why many of us start off well and then fail as the year draws on

2.4.1. is that we depend on the wrong source of strength and as the Pressures of life mount on us, we find ourselves increasingly UNABLE to stand strong

2.4.2. because we are now strong IN the Grace of Christ Jesus

3. In Personal Discipline

3.1. Another reason why we FAIL is that we are NOT DISCIPLINED in our Christian Lives (v.3-10)

3.1.1. and here Paul gives us 3 Pictures and 1 Example of what it means to be Disciplined in the Christian life

- Pictures: the Soldier, the Sportsman, Farmer
- Example: Paul himself

3.2. Be a Tough & Focused Soldier v.3

3.2.1. v.3 we are to be Tough - to endure Hardness

- the word means - to SUFFER HARDSHIP, or Suffer Affliction
- the average Christian quits on God and on Church after around the 1st encounter with hardship and suffering
- he gives the picture of the Soldier who has to endure many things

3.2.2. Soldiers have to go through much Hardship

- whether it is in training or in the actual battle
- it is not like a video game where we fight in the comfort of your armchair and with a mouse, keyboard and a joystick - but this is very uncomfortable work
- often soldiers are DEPRIVED of their favourite foods, drinks, favourite pasttimes, no comfortable bed, have to endure cold showers, cold food, dirty and dusty, hot conditions
- they not only TRAIN to EXPECT those kinds of conditions, but they are to be VICTORIOUS in those terrible conditions

3.2.3. v.4 that's why Christ needs us to be DISCIPLINED Christians

- because HE was the one that CHOSE us to be soldiers, we take our marching orders from Him, we're not the ones giving the orders
- by the way, ALL good soldiers are soldiers who OBEY orders that are given
- notice the word "please" - it carries the idea of EXCITING through the emotions
 - that we are to ACCOMODATE ourselves to the INTERESTS and DESIRES of someone else - Christ
 - ie. what makes God happy, is what I LIVE to do with my life!
- Christian - WHAT is your GOAL this year? Are you aiming to do things that make you happy or are you seeking to PLEASE the Lord who CALLED you?

3.2.4. that's why we are to be FOCUSED Christians

- focused on Christ, not on our OWN needs
 - we are not to become TANGLED up or tied down with the things of this life, but to be CONSUMED by what Christ wants to do in our lives instead
 - what's Waiting for us at the start of this year are a whole lot of Distractions - whether we are teens, singles or parents
 - that means we need to endure hardness, suffer hardship by SAYING NO to some things that are NOT going to help us grow as Christians TODAY
- Lu 8:14*** And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

3.3. Be as Disciplined as a Sportsman v.5

3.3.1. the picture for us here is that of the Olympic athlete

- one who DISCIPLINES his life so that he can TRAIN to compete
- who has to compete according to the RULES of Competition and not cheat

- 3.3.2. that means that we have to go by the Master's Rules, not our own
 - if we seek to receive a reward, then we have to make sure that what we do PLEASES the Master
 - that means COMPLYING with all the rules
- 3.3.3. this requires lots of Personal DISCIPLINE
 - discipline in Personal life, use of time, habits, diet, sleep & rest
 - discipline in Training
 - there are NO shortcuts
- 3.3.4. Illus: Singapore gold-medallist Gymanast - first SEA Games gold in 26 yrs
 - couldnt' wait for the games and all the celebrations to be over as she wanted nothing less than to RETURN to TRAINING
 - she said that she already felt guilty for putting off a few days training
- 3.3.5. I want us to see this:
 - ALL that she does, ALL that she THINKS about is WINNING the prize - pleasing her coach and team members
 - IF a lost person can discipline their lives and their flesh to accomplish that - WHAT about you Christian, who has the Power of God unto Salvation and the Holy Spirit indwelling in you?
 - Where is your Discipline and Determination?
- 3.3.6. they are willing to forgo the parties, the movies, the late nights, the unregimented life, the alcohol, the other entertainment and indulgence - in order to WIN a prize that will fade away

(1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? **So run, that ye may obtain.**

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; **but we an incorruptible.**

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

- WHAT price are you willing to pay to WIN the Master's Excitement and Approval?
- Note: any world class athlete must work and train hard for MANY LONG years before he is any good at all - yet many Christians give up after a few weeks or days

3.4. Be as Patient as a Farmer v.6

- 3.4.1. we see Paul shows us that there are 3 ways in which we Deny ourselves
- the soldier denies himself the world, the athlete must obey strict rules in the competition and in his life
 - and the farmer must LABOUR & PATIENTLY WAIT for the Results
- 3.4.2. the Farmer must be Patient
- he labours every day - from the time to Plow until Harvest - many long months
 - it is no use Reaping hard when there was no sowing
 - he labours with PATIENCE - not knowing how much reward he will get
 - he labours in HOPE - trusting God with the Ultimate FRUITS of his labour
 - he labours with DILIGENCE - watching daily for anything that could threaten or destroy the crop

3.5. Be Full of Endurance v.9-10

- 3.5.1. we see Paul's testimony of his Endurance
- v.9 he suffered Trouble, falsely accused as an evil doer FOR the Gospel's sake
 - he also suffers as a PRISONER for the same reason "even unto bonds"
 - but while they can imprison the man, they cannot STOP the Word!!
 - v.10 he ENDURES ALL things FOR sake that others might be SAVED
 - sometimes we forget that when Paul was writing this, this was during his 2nd Imprisonment and he was now living in VERY HARSH conditions
 - and not in a rented house as in his earlier imprisonment when he was under house arrest
- 3.5.2. Paul's endurance comes about not because he is thick skinned
- but that he KNOWS there is a Purpose for all that he is going through - the salvation of others and the Propagation of the Gospel
 - as a hardened soldier, this is EVERYTHING that he had prepared himself for - so WHY should he be discouraged?
- 3.5.3. I want us to see also that he endured because he could FORSEE the Eternal Consequence

(2 Corinthians 4:17, 18)

17 For our light affliction, **which is but for a moment**, worketh for us a **far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;**

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the **things which**

are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

- brethren - make it a resolution this year that we Direct our lives to be tough soldiers of Jesus Christ, disciplined athletes and patient farmers
- and that ALL that we do - we do it with the AIM of seeing an ETERNAL Consequence and not just temporal rewards
- today's Gold Medallist will be forgotten 10 years from now, but the rewards that Jesus hands out - will be FOREVER

4. In Personal Growth

4.1. No amount of training and discipline will help if we are NOT Growing as a Result

- 4.1.1. this year, I want to challenge everyone towards setting a goal of PERSONAL GROWTH in Christ
- 4.1.2. Peter told the suffering Christians that they needed to GROW in order to attain Victory in their lives

2Pe 3:18* But **grow in grace**, and **in the knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

- Grow in the Grace that God has given us - ie. to INCREASE in our use of the Grace or Divine Help that God has already given to us
 - we fail because we don't use what God has given to us
- Grow in the Knowledge of our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ
 - note: he's not just our Saviour, but our LORD

4.2. Be Dead to the World v.11

- 4.2.1. it is a FAITHFUL saying - ie. it is TRUE
 - that IF we are dead to the world, we are able to live IN Christ
- 4.2.2. scripture tells us that this was done the moment we were SAVED we are dead to the world

(Colossians 3:1-3)

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

- that since we've been saved, we ought to now put our Affection on things that are Heavenly and of an Eternal consequence
- that death broke all relationship with our former lives and the world and with sin
 - so all old contracts are cancelled and we are now FREE to choose

- He's also given us a New Life v.4 so that we are able to LIVE differently

4.3. Be a Diligent Student v.15

4.3.1. the word Study means to "give diligence"

- we need to be a Diligent student of the Word of Truth

4.3.2. Have you set Goals for this year?

- Bible Reading Goal?
- Bible Study Goal?
- Teaching Goals?

4.3.3. How about Stretching yourself? Perhaps you've allowed things to get Boring

- if you're already reading once through a year - then aim to do it 2X, 3X in a year
- if you've already done FBI - time to set goals for personal study
 - study through and mark up your bible for entire books of the bible, study the various doctrines of the bible etc.
- if you are already diligently doing your own self-study, then how about putting it to good use by TEACHING others?
 - take on someone in discipleship, volunteer to teach Sunday Sch
 - conduct an evangelistic bible study for non believers
- a good test of whether you know something well or not is whether you are able to TEACH others what you know

4.4. Be an Approved Workman v.15

4.4.1. here I see that there are 3 things that we need to WORK at: God's Approval, our Labour in Personal Study and at our Application

4.4.2. We need to WORK at God's Approval

- the word here has to do with the minting of metal coins
 - they were cast in moulds and then the rough edges had to be shaved off - but people would shave off more of the coin, "cutting corners"
- there were some money changers who performed the function of Approving "legal tender" coins in circulation
 - and they would not accept some who had "rounded corners"
- God requires His people to STUDY in order to PASS CERTIFICATION
 - obviously this certification is for the purpose of Deployment at work
- God's Word tells us that proper certification will ensure that we never need to be Embarrassed about our labour for the Lord

4.4.3. We need to WORK at our Study

- don't just stop at the FBI course
- some of us need to enroll again and start over - because Repetition is a good teacher

- some of us need to SET our own Study Goals - so that God can make better use of us
- most of us need to go through something over and over again if we are to master it - once through is never enough

4.4.4. We need to WORK at our Application

- Be a Doer This Year!
 - don't just sit there and be a good listener, DO something about what you've HEARD

Jas 1:22* But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

- it is possible for us to sit around, shout AMEN and satisfy ourselves, ultimately we deceive ourselves
- instead of allowing the Word to DEAL with our hearts, to transform us, to reprove us and to show us areas of our lives that we prefer to hide
- David says that his understanding came as a result of PRACTICE “keep” and APPLICATION

(Psalms 119:99, 100)

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

5. In Personal Service

5.1. Be Holy v.19

5.1.1. as we enter into the New Year, I believe that the most important thing that we need to be is to Be Holy

- nothing taints and contaminates God's work so quickly as sin and unclean hands
- As James suggests - we need to have Clean hands and also Pure Hearts

Jas 4:8* Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

5.1.2. we won't be able to choose what happens to us this year

- but we can choose the Right Response, a Holy Spirit-controlled response when it happens instead

- while we're on this, it is time to PUT AWAY the works of the Flesh
Ro 7:18* For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

(Galatians 5:19-21)

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

5.2. Be a Gentle Servant & Teacher v.24-25

5.2.1. Resolve to have the RIGHT ATTITUDE this year, not just in service, but in your Daily Life

5.2.2. Desired Attributes

- not someone who is argumentative, ready to debate and fight
- but someone who is gentle, mild to ALL men - including those whom we would naturally want to "put in their place"
- we need to be someone who's got a ready heart to TEACH others
- this also requires a PATIENT spirit in that person
- it also requires a spirit of meekness or humility (v.25)

5.2.3. the context has to do with Christian service, but I want to point out also that v.24 puts this in relation to ALL men, everyone that we encounter

- whether in the work place, at home, in school etc.

5.3. Be in the Will of God v.26

5.3.1. now if you examine v.25 and 26 again you will see that there are those whom God would have to grant Repentance

- ie. to turn them around from the direction that they are going - to a direction that ACKNOWLEDGES God's Truth
- this in turn helps them RECOVER from the snare of the devil

5.3.2. but there's another aspect here that I want to examine

- that there are brethren who have FALLEN into the snare of the devil
- literally the greek word says, this is a noose, a rope around our necks and anyone who had a rope around our necks is most certainly going to be LED by someone pulling it

- that's why the scripture says that such a person is being taken CAPTIVE - a prisoner of war, detained at Satan's PLEASURE

5.3.3. now I want us to THINK here

- there are in reality - only TWO types of Will here: God's Will or the Devil's Will - don't fool yourself, Self-will is also the Devil's Will
 - he was the first one that came up with Self-Will

(Isaiah 14:12-15)

12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

- he was the one who deceived Eve into taking up Self-Will, self-determination, self-reliance instead of TOTAL DEPENDENCE on God
- IF we seek to fulfill what "I" want this year, we will be walking in Devil's territory, only to ultimately be captured and made prisoner
- some of us by NOT knowing God's will for our lives - are going to attempt to GUESS at it by trying something based on our best guess or good intentions
 - and you will be used by the Devil as his tool to fulfill his will and his intentions instead

5.3.4. I want us to THINK some more

- some of us have FAILED miserably in 2005 because we were trying to live the Christian life - OUR OWN WAY
- Paul reminds us that even if he were to do that, he would fail

Ro 7:18* For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) **dwelleth no good thing**: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

- 5.3.5. it doesn't matter if we are talking about faithful church attendance, faithful service or a faithful witness
- if we are trying to do this through our own strength and flesh - instead of leaning on God's Grace - it is still our OWN WAY
 - and will led to your captivity by the Devil instead

6. Conclusion: WHAT to Do?

6.1. Summary of Resolutions for 2006

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6.2. The GOOD thing about a New Year is that we can RESET everything

- 6.2.1. and have a Fresh New Start
- that means 2005's failures don't need to hold us back
- 6.2.2. this reminds me of God's Grace - that when Grace comes into our lives, we can have a fresh new beginning
- 6.2.3. dont' say that "well I ought not to have resolutions, since they will be broken"
- 6.2.4. the surest way NOT to get anywhere is not to AIM at anything at all
- 6.2.5. the KEY is to be Strong in the Grace of our Lord (v.1), the same grace that took Him to the Cross, that allow Him to be spat upon and beaten, that kept Him on the Cross instead of freeing Himself
- 6.2.6. this same grace is available to all those who are willing to humble themselves and CRY OUT before the Lord that we NEED His Help this New Year