

New Year's Affirmations

By **Rev. Bill Spanjer, Jr.**

It is funny how we as human beings love the idea of a fresh start. We get excited for the first day of school and convince ourselves that this year it will be different. Fresh notebooks, pens and pencils inspire us as the blank slate of a new school year holds out the possibility of great success. New Year's provides that same hopeful anticipation, a chance to forget last year's failings and start over; and hence the tradition of making resolutions. Unfortunately, our track record is not very good. Just as the new school excitement wears off in about a week and a half, so does the renewed commitment to eat healthy, hit the gym and lose weight in the coming year.

Therefore I propose reciting some New Year's affirmations this year instead of making another set of ill-fated resolutions. That is, to be encouraged this year with some of the promises God makes to you rather than setting yourself up for condemnation by making dreamy eyed promises of your own. Perhaps we could take our cue from David in his familiar Psalm 23, a Psalm unfortunately relegated to funerals, but one that has a wealth of encouragement for the flock of God. David makes three affirmations in this Psalm that we would do well to recite to begin this new year.

First, David asserts that He will not want. This is not a resolution. He is not committing to something. Rather it is a statement of faith in the light of the truth that the Lord is his shepherd. David knows that if almighty God is his shepherd, then no matter what befalls him in the coming years of his life, the one thing he knows is that he will not be in want. The Lord will provide for all his needs. This is not to say that there will not be trouble or suffering, after all it is David who also wrote Psalm 22 in which he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" There will be times of great trouble in the life of any Christian, but with David we must affirm that God will never withhold from us the things we truly need; a comforting affirmation.

Secondly, David affirms that he will fear no evil. This is not because he expects to be kept from all trouble. After all, he affirms this even in the "valley of the shadow of death." No, David had experienced great enmity from those around him, but in all of it he was able to assert that God was his defender who prepares a table for him in the presence of his enemies so that he may eat in peace while God fights for him. Who knows what trouble awaits us this coming year, but whatever may befall, let us with David, assert that in the end, there is nothing to fear or with the apostle Paul who said, "if God is for us who can be against us?"

Finally, in light of the comforting truth that the Lord is his shepherd, David affirms that he will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. David rejoices in the fact that he is not just a sheep, but a son and as a son has been given the right to the household. He is a member of the family of an all providing, all protecting Father and he is confident that he will be so for all eternity. In a year that promises to provide any number of challenges, may we like David, find our ultimate comfort in the fact that we have an unshakeable and eternal home in the household of God.

Happy New Year.

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