

TAKE A LOOK BACK AT THIS PAST YEAR

James 4:7-10 **Daniel 5:22**

Introduction: Most business do at least a yearly inventory to account for what was bought and what was sold. It seems that the older we get the more we look back at our past lives. Sometimes couples that have been married for many, many years stay at the breakfast table and talk about where all the years went and how fast everything seemed to have fled by. They talk about when and how they met, the children that they had raised and the countless friends they have known. It does one good to just stop and think about what has been happening. As Christians, let's take a look back at this past year.

I. LET'S EVALUATE THIS PAST YEAR

1. Think back over the events of this past year.
 - Think about what you did in deeds, words, attitudes.
 - Some brought you good feelings and results.
 - Some brought you unhappiness, disappointment, even misery.
 - We are foolish if we don't learn from the mistakes we made this past year.

2. Think about what you left undone, put off, never got around to finishing or even starting.
 - Some of these were good things and would have done some good.
 - Witnessing for Jesus opportunities that you never took advantage of.
 - That heart to heart talk you were going to have with that friend or relative.
 - Never got around to praying for that person you told someone that you would.
"To him/her who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him/her it is sin."

3. Think about the times you were discouraged.
 - Do you remember that Jesus also got discouraged? *Matthew 23:37 John 14:7-9*
 - Remember when Paul got discouraged because Christians refused to accept him at first?
 - From "The Land of Beginning Again" by Louise Fletcher Tarkington:
 - "...So I wish that there were some wonderful place
called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches,
And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door
And never put on again..."
 - There is one church that starts over each year by burning slips of paper, symbolizing a Christian's sins and God's forgiveness.

II. NOW, LET US FACE THIS NEW YEAR CONFIDENTLY

1. Paul knew how: *Philippians 3:13*
 - Let's not let the past be a drag on this new year.
 - *Isaiah 1:18* gives assurance of a new start with God

- "A New Year's Thoughts" by Lillian Gray:

"Let us walk softly, friends;
For strange paths lie before us all untrod,
The New Year, spotless from the hand of God,
Is thine and mine, O friend.

Let us walk straightly, friend;
Forget the crooked paths behind us now,
Press on with steadier purpose on our brow,
To better deeds, O friend.

Let us walk gladly, friend;
Perchance some greater good than we have known
Is waiting for us, or some fair hope flown
Shall yet return, O friend.

Let us walk humbly, friend;
Slight not the heart's ease blooming round our feet;
The laurel blossoms are not half so sweet,
Or lightly gathered, friend.

Let us walk kindly, friend;
We cannot tell how long this life shall last,
How soon these precious years be overpast;
Let love walk with us, friend.

Let us walk quickly, friend;
Work with our might while lasts our little stay,
And help some halting comrade on the way,
And may God guide us, friend."

2. A word of caution for the new year from *Proverbs 27:1*

- It has been said that a new year is like stepping into a bobbing boat for a trip to the unknown.
- You have not gone this way before, so be sure who you are trusting yourself to.

CONCLUSION:

1. Assurance and peace about tomorrow comes only in complete surrender of yourself, life, will and substance to the Lord God.
2. The choice of HOW tomorrow comes is up to you.
3. Joshua said it well a long time ago: "*...as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord...*"
4. Will you join Joshua in that attitude as you start this new year?