

## GETTING READY FOR THE NEW YEAR

Dr. George O. Wood

I'm speaking on the theme "Getting Ready for the New year" because this is my last opportunity on a Sunday night in 1986 to preach. The next two Sunday nights we have special Christmas things. Then three nights from now I'll be in Jordan getting ready to venture into Israel the next day. So I wanted to take this special opportunity before getting into the Christmas seasons to give us all three weeks to kind of get set for the new year and get some teaching that would help you do that.

I've got as the scripture, and this scripture is more a taking off point. When we're in Sunday mornings we've been going through the scripture. That's very much a part of learning what God's message to us is – systematically going through it. But sometimes we're allowed to take a topic and just use a scripture as a jumping off place. So I'm going to use Luke 9:51 as a jumping off place. That verse is telling us that Jesus moved with intentionality in life.

For those that have been at all involved in goal setting and time management the word "intentionality" is a very large word. We are really living in one of two ways. We are living life and let it simply happen to us and sort of being a piece of wood, a log, floating along at whatever the tide of life is driving us toward. Or we have chosen to live with an inward propeller and direction and we are going in the direction which our intentions have led us. And Jesus certainly did not live life as a passive floater. But lived with tremendous amount of intentionality.

Luke 9:51 tells us specifically that as the time approached for him to be taken up into heaven Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. The Greek text says "Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem." At the time he did that he was a hundred miles north in Galilee. There were many months of ministry yet before him. But already he had moved intentionally to set his face in a direction.

I would simply add that it seems to me that the Lord's example of living life with purpose is meant to be a pattern for us as well. When we speak of making plans as Christians we're immediately caught into a paradox because we learned this morning that we're not to say anything except the Lord will it. Jesus tells us as well that we are not to take thought for the morrow, Matthew 6:34. Yet on the other hand he tells us that no king going out to fight a battle will be successful unless he first sets down and figures out the cost of the engagement. The same with building a building or a tower of some kind. Therefore as Christians we're called upon to live our plans somewhat lightly. We're to make them seriously but we're to suspend them before the Lord and say, Lord, if you will prosper these plans then our lives are like seeds that in order for them to come to birth and to bring fruit in our life it is you who must provide the soil and the rain and the matrix for the event that will make these seedling ideas strong instruments in our life.

It seems to be that before we make specific plans for the new year there are some everlasting perspectives that are meant to be a part of our life. I note five of them tonight that help us in formulating any specific plans. These questions will help us to make more accurate plans.

The first question that we ought always to ask in life is Am I prepared to meet the Lord should he call for me today?

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Is there a clean house in my life? Is there anything in there that shouldn't be there? Is there any unconfessed sin? Is there any broken relationship? Is there any unresolved anger? Is there any unforgiveness in my life? Lord, am I totally ready should you call me today?

I realize that we are saved by grace through faith. And that it isn't our works being clean that make us right in the Lord's presence. An interesting theological question is for example if you are involved in a sin the minute Jesus elects to return to earth, will you go up or not?

When I was a kid that was a real stunner of a question for me because I was sure that the Lord had timed his Second Coming to coincide with something wrong I was doing in my life. I sort of lived in that dread of works-Christianity. Obviously we are saved by grace through faith and it's our relationship with God that keeps us in him.

But still within the security of that relationship we do not as Christians want to become careless about our lives so that we say I know I'm saved by grace through faith so it really doesn't matter what I do or what my attitudes are. Lord, am I totally prepared today. If I didn't have another 6 hours in my life. There have been people in this congregation this past year that are in the Lord's presence that had no idea an hour before they went into the Lord's presence that that was the day they were going to meet him.

One of our members who went to be with the Lord the last day of 1985 would say continually as he got up every morning. Day after day he said this, "Is this the day I will meet my maker?" For some people that may be rather morose but I don't think in the Christian's life that is morose at all. It reveals an expectancy that we always live on the thin edge of eternity. I want to say that every day of this coming year and every day left in this old year. Am I prepared to meet the Lord should he come today?

The second question I want to ask that has enduring significance is Am I ready to obey his known will for my life?

There are a lot of things about 1987 that I have not the foggiest idea of what's going to happen. None of us can predict what is ahead of us in that New Year. But while there is much of that new year that we cannot predict and we do not know the turns in the road it may take we know today what God's known will for our life is. The will of God is like an iceberg. Ten percent of it is above the water and it represents the unknown will of God. What we're actually going to do in the coming months or year. And 90% is that part of the iceberg which is below the water line and it represents the part of the will of God that we already know. What kind of perspectives and attitudes and healing attributes in our life are to take place.

Paul appears to be very concerned with this matter of being in his known will for today. He talks in 1 Corinthians 9:27 about the fear of being a castaway. Having served the Lord and won others to the faith, lest I myself become one who does not stand the test and therefore is thrown away, no longer usable to the kingdom. Lord help me to live before you in such a way that I am in obedience to your known will for my life.

The third perspective to live with on a continual basis is this: if tragedy or reverse should come to me today will I continue as a person of faith to believe that even in this God will work for the

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good if tragedy or reverse comes or in the new year. Will I continue as a person of faith to believe that even in this God will work for the good?

With the percentages of the number of people in this room there is bound to be a number of us who in 1987 are going to go through some really tough times. David has shared things that in 1984 or 85 had walked through some very tough times and he articulated 5 things that brought on a stress attack. I wouldn't want that for any single person here yet I know that we catch diseases and we have automobile accident and we have financial reverses and loses within family. All kinds of unpleasant things occur.

In the midst of those things occurring the Lord has told us the story of the two people who built – one upon the sand and one on the rock. The storms occurred to both builders but the one whose house was built upon the rock lasts. The scriptures are saying to us in our touch times to believe that God is going to work for the good even through this. I want to be prepared to do that. If something unspeakable happens to me I think the worst that could happen to me is if a member of my family were taken or in some way injured. If the worst happens am I prepared to still have faith and trust you and believe you for the good?

The fourth thing I want to say as kind of an enduring perspective for any year including the coming year is Am I open to God invading my life with new opportunities and new directions? Am I opened to the wind that the Holy Spirit might blow in my life and create a whole new direction for me? Am I open to God invading my life with new opportunities and new directions?

We had a 65<sup>th</sup> birthday party a month or two ago for Paul. I love his attitude towards life. His perspective is, I just turned 65. I've decided not to retire. I have decided to ask God for a new wind of the Holy Spirit and to believe God for 20 more effective years in ministry. I looked at that and thought maybe Paul's giving himself a pep talk here. But then I realized the more I heard him say it that he was dead serious about wanting a new wind of the Spirit to make his next 20 years of ministry more effective than all the preceding years of ministry. I think that's maybe one of the reasons why Paul has stayed so young is that he keeps bringing in this new challenge of perspective and opportunity. It isn't business as usual, the same old rut over and over again.

We all gathered around him to pray just before we ate together and there were various prayers offered. I thought what could I pray. The Lord kind of gave me a prayer to pray that reminded us by going through scripture of all the people in life that God began to use after they turned 65. Moses and Caleb as tremendous examples that God only began to use when they had begun drawing their social security check!

I like that. Lord, what new opportunities and wonderful things are you opening in my life. I sort of look back over the past years of my life and I realize that as I head into this new year that there were other years I had no idea what God was going to bring in that year but I was simply open to new possibilities.

I look at the good things of life that have happened to me and there's probably not a single one of them I could have predicted when I left an old year and headed into a new year. And we can't predict the bad things either. I want to be open to opportunity and possibility. It seems to me that these were perspectives that were meant to have all our life.

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Getting the general things out of the way let's set our face toward the new year and ask some questions.

Are there any definite changes scheduled for my life over which I do not have control but they are going to happen anyway?

As you look ahead to 1987 can you definitely see any changes that are going to happen and you know they're going to happen but you don't have any control over them. Let me indicate some that might be out there: turning 65, if you're going to turn 65 you don't have any control over that. Turning 40, for some people. Or 50, the most traumatic birthday of all. Is that one of the things that's going to happen this year over which you don't have control. How about an operation? How about the birth of a child? If you already know you're with child and it's going to happen you don't have any control over that. How is that going to affect the year for you? Or what about a graduation?

For us this year it's going to be a child leaving home. George Paul is scheduled to graduate from high school and we know that's going to happen. Lord willing! That's going to be tough. We don't know if Evangline is going to keep on going or meet Mr. Right or whatever. We don't know that. But we know that half the nest is going to be empty along about August this next year. I personally don't highly look forward to that at all. But I know that life's got to go on so that's what's going to happen. I want to gear up spiritually for that change and get ready for it.

Can you identify any things that are going to happen in your life that you don't have any control over but they're going to happen? How are you going to face those what perspectives do you have towards those?

I want to be prepared to have right and healthy perspectives toward critical changes in my own life.

Then a second question I'd like you to ask What are the three major changes that I want to make in the coming year?

As you look at your life just take the three biggest things that you would like to see different in 1987 than they were in 1986. Things over which you possibly might have some degree of control. We're talking about biblically approved changes here. We're not talking about "I want to get a new wife/husband. Or I'd like to throw my present kids out. Or I'd like to have a million dollars so therefore I'll rob a bank or play the lottery to get it." We're talking about biblically approved changes that we want to see take place. What are the top three?

One of the mistakes it seems to me we make in planning for a New Year is that we try to do everything at once. We try to do too much and we'd be better off to work at two or three things and keep faithfully at those. There are always bumps in the road in engineering new things in our life we have reverses. The key is to keep coming back and keep work in on them and keep asking for the Lord's help.

Several changes I wanted to make in my own life was operate no longer on a debt principle. I wanted to be free of debt except for mortgages on the house. Along with that I wanted in our family to be able to considerably increase our stewardship to the Lord's work. At the time it seemed impossible to bring those two events together. It seems like when you go in debt for

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school you're forever paying for it. The financial hardships that we went through to gain that education coupled with low pay in the early years. That's one of the dilemmas of going into the ministry. You want to get the best education you can but when you wind up ending that education you're so far in debt and then you generally step into a very, very low paying position so that you're forever borrowing money just to keep going. In our early years of ministry even here we used to sell furniture out of the house in order to make weekly bills. We did that primarily because we began our marriage with a backlog of bills that kept with us for ever and ever.

It was interesting how the Lord took that intention. I had to make that determination. That involved laying down some specific steps. Five steps on a grid. I'd like you to walk through this in regard of what your goal might be. My goal that year about four years ago was get out of debt. That was the goal. What is the present situation: can't meet my bills. Can't give as much as I want. Barely keeping my head above water. That's the present situation. What are the force that help me toward my goal: desire, I'm tire of living like this. Forces hindering: 18% credit card that was there. Not enough income to generate all the outgo that I wanted to spend. That's a hindering force. Appetites that are greater than the resources to supply them.

Then you had to put steps toward the goal. As I worked through this one of the steps was establish a budget. Then afterwards, secondly, itemize, write down every single nickel you spend and figure out where it is going. That was a hard, hard exercise to do but it was very important, very necessary.

I found when I began to itemize everything I discovered little things I had been missing. It helped explain in our own life why we've been able to make a significant turnaround. I noted as I began to itemize everything that I had never bothered to balance a checkbook. Part of it was reaction I think to Dad's way of doing everything where he always accounted for every nickel he ever earned or spent and I said, I'm going to be prosperous and I won't ever have a need to figure out where every nickel is going so that's beneath my dignity to balance my checkbook. If when I get the checks back and look at them and find them somewhere within \$25, I'll just write the balance and go on from there. That's the way I went year after year after year. I was at the same time operating as the chief financial officer of the church. That's why churches have boards. I was much wiser in church finances than I was in my own.

I discovered in going through this itemization that where I was banking they were charging me \$4 a month to do banking with them. I thought that's a rip off. They're earning off the little bit of balance I've got there. They shouldn't be charging me \$4. Where could I have a bank that wouldn't charge me any money? I found there was a bank right across the street that had signs out welcoming new accounts and they wouldn't charge anything if you kept a minimum balance. And besides they paid you for the money you had in there. I remember I got my first interest check. It was around \$2 for the month. I had a net turnaround that month of \$6. I was so excited. It could have been \$6000. It was Hey! I'm watching over every dime!

I talked to a business man in the church about this. He reminded me of the principle that the person who is faithful over a little, God will make faithful over much. And I settled down on that. It was a neat thing. It was a turning point for me when I became concerned where the pennies and the nickels and the one dollars were going. That was a step towards the goal.

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Of course there were a lot of other things added to that including cutting back and refusing to charge anything more no matter if we needed it or not. It was not going to be bought if we couldn't pay for it that month, it wasn't going to be that. All those good rules.

Gradually over a several year period we finally managed to climb out of that encumbering debt which had dragged around us all our married life.

But there are still other goals I want to work on. Some of these are not so deeply spiritual. I'm going to pick on the ones that are easiest to talk about. I'll let you work on some of the things that are deep in your life.

One of the things that I realized that I needed to set as a goal in 1987 and maybe you need to is that I'm not getting enough exercise and I am overeating. I'm at this point about 25 pounds over weight. So that's my goal. On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1987, if the Lord tarries and if the Lord wills, I'm going to weigh 175 pounds. That's the goal. What is the present situation? It's the waistline. What are the forces helping? There aren't many.

When you want to make changes in your life there's always more things hindering than there are helping. That's why change is so difficult. Inertia is the easiest thing to do. Do nothing. Forces helping: the only thing I've got going for me again I desire. And it's not that strong either. Especially when I get around chocolate doughnuts and apple pie ala mode. Desire? Mildly strong desire.

Forces hindering? The board staff party which we had Friday night we brought a big bowl of my favorite chocolate mints. They are right there at the lamp stand in the bedroom. There's at least 500 of them I think. I just ate 3 this afternoon unthinkingly. That's a hindering force. I hate salads. That is a hindering force. I hate fish. That is a hindering force. I do not like chicken. That is a hindering force. I like red meat. Baked potatoes with sour cream and butter. That is a hindering force. I like deserts – chocolate pie, chocolate cake, and chocolate doughnuts and chocolate ice cream. All the forces that are hindering! What am I going to do with that? I've got to take some steps to the goal.

One of the steps I'm going to take is between now and the end of the year I'm going to write down daily everything that I eat. Ooh! I won't want to face that.

Then I'm going to talk to a medical source and find out what the calorie level is of the food that I'm eating on a daily basis.

Third, I'm going to get a doctor to tell me how many calories a day I need to eat in order to get down in 365 days to 175 pounds.

The fourth thing I'm going to do is I'm not going on a crash diet cause I can't stand crash diets and I wouldn't keep on them anyway. I am not going to change my basic way of living to lose this weight. I'm still going to enjoy food. I'm just going to lose weight slowly.

Fifth, I'm going to exercise. I've already got a program to exercise 4 times a week times 45 minutes. Then I am going to push aside as an automatic rule French fries and deserts maybe once a week. Not once a day!

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Then the next thing I'm going to do is I'm going to deliberately leave food on my plate. That's not for the kids. I was brought up in a home where you eat every bit on your plate. You sit there until it is eaten! I don't have to eat everything that is set before me. Or at least take less. If I have control I'll take less. But if somebody else serves me I'm going to leave some.

There will probably be some other things but I know those are specific things I've got to do if I'm going to shed that weight. That's about a half a pound a week for 52 weeks.

You need to take a moment to do something. Maybe it's funny like losing weight or maybe it's serious like making some real changes in your habit patters in relationships or with other people or maybe it has to do with making some professional objectives and goals that you would like to break into a new career or something. You need to itemize that. What are the things that are hindering you? What are the things that are helping you? What specific steps need to be taken? Then monitor that as you go along.

Those deal with the changes we want to make in our life.

Then the third question in regard to 1987 that I want to ask is not only what changes are scheduled for me over which I'm not going to have any control and what are the major changes I want to make.

Thirdly, what major changes do I need to make? Not that I want to make. But what do I need to make.

There are some changes that need to be made that I don't necessarily want to. But which the Lord is requiring it of me. The difficulty with making changes in this area is that it is certainly more difficult to change in an area where change is being externally opposed upon us. Or it initially doesn't have our will.

For example let me relate some areas where we may need to make some changes. Let's look at the whole, wonderfully thrilling topic of spiritual discipline for example. Do I need to make changes in spiritual discipline? How about do I have a daily time of prayer in my life? Do I have a daily time sitting down and letting God's word speak to me as I read it? Another change might be what about my giving and my stewardship to the Lord. Does my giving reflect a tithe, 10% of my income? Another change, do I rarely fast? That's going to help me lose weight by the way. If I'll remember that. Isn't fasting what we're called upon to do as Christians to signify our brokenness and our humility to God? Isn't it part of the key to spiritual victory and triumph, a demonstration that we have control over our body. Therefore since we have control over that area, the Lord gives us faith to acknowledge that he has control over us in other areas in dimension and prayer. Can I submit to a fasting routine that has me fast once a month or once a week, or maybe in some cases several times a week? There are some people who are hypoglycemic who can't fast but maybe there are things other than food that can be fasted.

What about regular personal ministry? Do I have a regular discipline of personal ministry that I'm plugged into. What about church attendance and being really a faithful part of the community of God? Are all these disciplines present in my life? Do I need to make any changes in the New Year in respect to these?

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There may be some changes that we need to make that are going to take God's miraculous intervention in our life. Things we have not had the power to free ourselves from that God's going to need to step in and help us with? You could look at those two and ask the Lord as you take this home and work with it over the next few weeks, what changes do you want to make in my life that I need to make, even if I haven't initially wanted to make them, what is your word calling me to?

I want to kind of sum up with looking at what 1987 has in regard to the content of time. There will be 365 days, the Lord willing, in 1987. Because it is not a leap year, therefore it is a normal year. In that 365 days we will have 8760 hours to break it down more specifically. If we even want to break it down more than that we will have 525,600 minutes. So we've got just all kinds of time slipping through our fingers. 525,600 whole minutes to live in, in 1987 if the Lord gives us life and breath and he tarries. What are we going to do with those 525,600 minutes?

But a lot of it is already programmed and is going to happen. If you sleep 8 hours a night which is about my resting rate. I have to have 8 hours of sleep or I get grumpy. Too much and I get grumpy and too little and I get grumpy. I need right about 8 hours. Some of you can sleep on less, some may need more. But 8 hours sleep a night means that in the course of the year you need to sleep 175,200 minutes. That's a lot of time snoring and dreaming. But that's the way it's got to be for our bodies to get the rest that they need.

Then if we're going to work, and I realized after I did this whole thing that I didn't take a normal workweek. I just myself have had a difficult time taking a day off so I just plugged in 8 hours a day and forgot you were supposed to take 2 days off. So I've got 8 hours a day, 7 days a week which is part of why I'm gaining by the way. I have everybody working or going to school 175,200 minutes. I realize that's going to differ based upon how much you're working or if you're working or you're retired. But for the working person or the school person, including transportation and the like if you do any overtime, that's based on a 56 hour workweek. Maybe you don't work that much. Maybe some of you work more than that. But that's another if you work full time that's 175,200 minutes.

Then how much time do we need for eating. We need to eat breakfast, lunch, supper. All the time to cook the food, get to the table, eat it and clean up. Then the time we spend in the bathroom and making ourselves up, the time we take to comb our hair. All those add up. I figure we probably need about 65,700 minutes this next year for that.

Then if we're a half average American we will be watching television 2 hours a day instead of 4. The average American watches TV 4 hours a day. But let's say this group is only half average. If you're watching TV 2 hours a day it's the same amount of time whether it's Christian TV or not Christian TV. Time is still time. Just because you're watching Christian TV doesn't mean you're not spending the time watching TV. Being passive about life but that's another whole point. By the way, I think some of those early Pentecostal preachers were dead right. I remember all the rules. I think looking back they were probably right. TV is probably the single most crippling thing toward defective ministry in the body of Christ. It has absolutely destroyed a lot of wonderful things that were in the church prior to the pre TV age including the tremendous vitality of Sunday night services and lay involvement and ministry and people had time for families and time for *koinonia* groups and time to pray together and time for home meetings and all those sort of stuff. Now we're locking into watching Dan Rather and Roger

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Mudd and Peter Jennings and all these kinds of things. So if we only watch TV 2 hours a day on an average then that means that this year we're going to spend 43,800 minutes in front of the TV.

If we get down to attending church every Sunday morning and include travel time. I realize that this doesn't include 11:00 service where you need more travel time if you're coming from north county. But one Sunday morning service including travel time and if you go every Sunday morning for a whole year and don't miss a Sunday for the whole year 6,240 minutes. Or if you come for Sunday school plus Sunday morning worship, add another few thousand minutes and it's 10,920. If you come like you have on Sunday nights and don't miss a Sunday for the whole year you're at 17,160 minutes. Then if you throw in Wednesday night you're at 23,400 minutes. Then of course if you begin to throw in some other kinds of activities in the church or maybe substitute an activity for Wednesday night or some other event, 23,000 seems to be kind of a good total. About half of the time we spend watching TV.

So we've kind of got the idea of where the year is. Out of the total year of 525,600 minutes assuming we spend the maximum amount of time in church attendance we have already spent 483,300 minutes leaving us only 42,300 minutes left. That's all we've got to plan for in 1987. We've only got to plan for 42,300 minutes. That leaves us only about 2 hours a day that we have control over. Isn't that incredible? No wonder people are worn out in our culture. Just 2 hours a day to live and do whatever we want to do with it. The Lord gets some of it, work gets some of it, sleep gets some of it, family gets some of it and then we've got 2 hours left.

Really much of the quality of our life is determined by what we do with those 2 hours. How do we propose to spend them? Why not log in your time also over the next 3 weeks and see what it tells you and then contemplate prayerfully any changes that need to take place?

The ice cream of the year is going to depend on how we spend those 42,000 minutes. Whether we invest them in the Lord's work, with other people, with improvement things so we can become a more effective tool for the king, how we're going to do that. That's critical.

I want to close with a little reading from scripture. A favorite psalm for the New Year is Psalm 20. I think it was written especially to be a psalm for God's people when they're going into a period of newness in their life. I won't exposit this psalm at all. Just sort of read it for you and let it be a psalm for the New Year. By the way, one of the things too I'm purposing to do for the New Year is I'm going to adopt a scripture for the year. At the end of every year they prayed that the Lord would give them a scripture that lasts them through the whole year. I've never done that before but I'm going to do it this year. The Lord's already given me a scripture and I'm excited to see how he's going to use that in 1987 in my life if he wills.

Psalm 20. The first five verses are simply a prayer for the future. "May the Lord answer you when you are in distress. May the name of the God of Jacob protect you." Why the God of Jacob? Because Jacob was the person who was always wheeling and dealing. May that God who helps the planner, the dreamer, and the schemer, may that God help you and protect you. We're going to need to be protected at times from our own plans. "May he send you help from the sanctuary. And grant you support from Zion. May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings." The burnt offerings are not the leftovers. They always represent the best of our life given to God. May God remember those. "May he give you the desires of your heart and make all your plans succeed. We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the Lord grant all your requests."

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If I had it within me to ask all of you to do this I would. If a number of you would I think it would be great to be able at the end of the year, of 1987, to do this. But when the psalmist says we will lift up our banners in the name of the Lord our God, this would be a great family project for those of you in families. Take a worship banner and get a black flannel and hang it in a living room or bedroom or kitchen or somewhere and then as moments come in the life of your family or if you're single as a single person in the course of 1987, create a symbol that describes that event and sew it on or paste it on or staple it on to that banner. So as the year comes things are going up on that banner that suggests kind of key moments of that year when God is intercepting your life and is especially present to you. Whether it's down times or up times.

Then as we close out 1987 lets have a Sunday evening service where we all bring our banners and walk around the sanctuary and have a parade with our banners. That's what this psalmist is talking about here. "We will shout for joy and lift up our banners in the name of the Lord our God." How are we going to lift up banners if we never make any? Lift of the banner in the name of the Lord our God. You met us. We lift up our banners in the name of our God. "May the Lord grant all your requests."

Having prayed that for the future David in verses 6-8 has an assurance about the future. "Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed. He answers him from his holy heaven, with the saving power of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses. But we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They are brought to their knees and fall but we rise up and stand firm."

That's the testimony of someone who's confidence is rally deeply in the Lord. Then there is a shout of response: "Oh, Lord, save the king. Answer us when we call." We say of Jesus, "May he reign for ever and ever. Long live the king. Answer us when we call and we shout in response." That's what we'll do when we all bring our banners and show them. We're going to lift up a shout praise to God.

So get ready for the New Year. Don't let it just happen to you. Don't say I'm not going to make any resolutions. I'm not going to make any changes this year. One year is just like another anyway. That's kind of a defeated way of looking at life. How do we ever change unless somehow there's a will in our life to make changes? The Lord stirs us up and says, "Get going. I've got growth for you. I'm not done with you yet. You're not some flat level plain. I want you to get going and growing." The way to do that is be open before the Holy Spirit and hear him say to us, Here's what I want to change in your life. We add that to what we want to change and we come up with some great advances in the New Year.

Lord Jesus, the New Year is going to be before us in just short weeks now. We take a moment to give it to you. Already before it's begun to happen we offer it to you. Maybe this New Year will be the year in which you come. What a great year that would be, Lord. When you descend with all the angels and all the saints whose rest is won and take us home to be with you. If 87 is the year, even so come Lord Jesus! Lord, if you give us that whole year to live we want to live it with purpose and intention. We do want to have decorations on our banners of life that you are the Lord who intervenes in our own personal history. We read in the Bible about how you intervene in Israel's' history and all that. But, Lord, you intervene in our own personal history and in our family history. You do your works and deeds of might within our lives as well. We want to celebrate that and be aware of that. We just want, Lord, to give all of our plans and our dreams and our desires to you and ask that

## **GETTING READY FOR THE NEW YEAR**

you be present among us. May we in this New Year be better and stronger people for you who live life more purely, more righteously, with more power than we've ever lived before. All of our dreams you're mending. Spirit, now live in us. Use us, fill us, mold us in this coming year. We thank you for your presence on this people. Through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.