

Northeast Church of Christ

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From the Pen of Paul: *At Year's End*

Note: The following article was written in December and was not included due to not printing a Bulletin for the past three weeks, thus, the reason for the timing being a little late.

—Paul

AS ANOTHER YEAR IS APPROACHING very fast, it is a good time to pause and consider some things of importance. With the passing of the old year, we are once again reminded of the truth of the words of James: “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). And as we look back over the past year and remember our loved ones who have departed this life, who were with us at this time last year, we are again made to realize just how true the words of Peter were when he penned them, and how true they are today almost 2,000 years after he wrote them. “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away” (I Pet. 2:24). In response to Paul’s instruction to “Weep with them that weep” (Rom. 12:15), we have “wept” over the loss of two of our members, as well as a number of our relatives. We lost two of our beloved ladies, Lena Farris near the first of the year, and Reva Bilbrey near the end of the year. At least three of our members lost a parent, and one a mate; several brothers and other relatives also “withered as grass.” Brother Doyle Hensley even lost two brothers.

And as we anticipate the beginning of a New Year, if the Lord will, we need to remind ourselves of the words of Solomon when he wrote, “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov.

27:1). And on this same subject, Jesus tells us, “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:34). During 2009 we have seen accomplishments and failures, both on a national scale and on an individual basis. The economic crisis in our country has caused many to suffer through hardships with the loss of jobs and the loss of savings. Perhaps these hardships have caused us to stop and consider what is really important. Even though we must have certain “things” to survive and get by, we also need to remember that “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (I Tim. 6:7). Because of this fact, Paul reminds us, “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (I Tim. 6:6).

We need to ask ourselves, “Have I grown as a Christian? Is my faith stronger or weaker than it was at the end of 2008? Have I grown in knowledge of God’s word through diligent study and application? Have I worshipped as often as I could and should have? Have I faithfully remembered the death of my Saviour by observing the memorial in memory of His death each Lord’s day? Have I been a liberal and cheerful giver to the work of the church? Am I a better, more mature Christian now than at the end of last year; or have I slipped backward; or have I remained the same? Did I reach any personal goals during the year that I set as the New Year began?” These and other similar questions are all an important part of self-inventory. Paul wrote to the Corinthian brethren,

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“Can you tell what a person is by the company he keeps?”

IT IS A KNOWN FACT that all of us are at times seen standing with, or talking to, those who are not what they should be morally and spiritually. This was often the case with Christ and His apostles. A good example of this is Jesus talking with the woman at the well (Jn. 4:1-30). Paul said that it is not possible for Christians to be totally separated in their life, and avoid dealings with those who are not Christians (I Cor. 5:9-10). So, we must come in contact with those who do not care for God and the Bible from time to time.

There is a great difference in coming in contact with sinners and wrongdoers at various times in our life and in running with them. If a person who calls himself a Christian is constantly seen with and makes his closest friends from those who do not care for God, I question him and his religion. It makes little difference with me what he professes: his life speaks louder than his words!

The Bible teaches that the man of God chooses to be with the people of God. He prefers them above all others (Rom. 12:10). Lot's soul was vexed because of the ungodly souls about him (II Peter 2:7). We are not to listen to, stand with, sit with, the ungodly (Ps. 1:1-2). What fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness? What communion does light have with darkness? What likeness does Christ have with the devil? What part does a believer have with an infidel? Please read II Corinthians 6:14-18 in this connection.

We never see crows keeping company with black birds. Hawks do not keep company with

little chickens. Pigs do not run with horses. Sheep do not run with wolves. Cats do not keep company with bulldogs. Do you wonder why this is the case? Would you not agree that it is because they do not have anything in common? They are of a different kind.

You can mark it down as a matter of fact that company keeps its kind. Sinners run with sinners. Christians run with Christians. False teachers run with false teachers. Liberal church members run with liberal church members. Worldly church members run with worldly church members. Ministers of the church of Christ that do not respect the Bible keep company with ministers of their kind. Liberal churches want liberal preachers, and Bible-believing churches want Bible-believing preachers. It is impossible to run with the goats and not smell like them!

I have always been taught that if a thing walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, has feathers like a duck, has feet like a duck, legs like a duck, a bill like a duck, swims like a duck, runs with the ducks, it is a duck! So don't blame me if you run with the wrong crowd, worship with the wrong crowd, teach like the wrong crowd, fellowship with the wrong crowd, defend the wrong crowd, if I say you are a part of the wrong crowd! Our company tells what we are, but it also tells what we are not. If a person does not like this, then let him repent, and set his house in order.

—*Malcolm L. Hill*

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves” (II Cor. 13:5).

If the Lord grants us a New Year, what will it be like? Will we face the death of more of our loved ones? Will it be a prosperous year for us as a congregation and for us individually? Will we continue to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 3:18)?

And, perhaps above all other considerations, we should determine to “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matt. 24:42). Are you ready should the Lord return? In the context of the previously

mentioned admonition, Jesus also urged, “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:44). May each of us evaluate what is the most important and then determine to “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). Let each of us resolve to do everything we can to encourage each other to faithfulness, to love one another, to assist one another, and never be a source of discouragement. Will you join me in this resolution for the New Year—and always?

—*Paul M. Wilmoth*