

20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning Week 1 (December 29, 2013-January 4, 2014)

As we move into 2014, I am making a change in the way I present these devotions for at least a few months. The focus will be on **one** verse or thought instead of the Bible study format I have been using. My prayer is that this will allow **more of you** to participate in these short lessons designed to strengthen your walk with God.

Sunday, December 29

Where there is no vision, the people perish: (Proverbs 29:18a---KJV)

New Years Day is my favorite holiday because it represents a brand new start. It reminds me of God's promise in 2 Corinthians 5:17. We all need a do-over from time to time, but it is difficult to know where to begin. I recommend using January 1 (if not today) as your starting point. Many (if not most) people do not make New Year's resolutions because they don't want to put pressure on themselves to change old habits. Today's verse tells you God's perspective on that line of reasoning. How can you measure success unless you have tangible goals to move you forward and help you to put your feet (and knees) on the cold floor every morning? Think about what you would like to accomplish for God's glory in 2014 and then write your goals down and post them in a visible place. It is better to reach high and fail than to reach for nothing and succeed!

Monday, December 30

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus knew from the start **why** He had come to earth and **what** He was sent to accomplish (see Mark 1:38; John 10:10, 17-18). That mission kept Him moving toward Jerusalem where He would be crucified for the sins of the world. He had to become our Savior before He could be our Lord and King! Since Jesus authored our salvation, and since He will keep you strong to the end (see Philippians 1:6), we must keep our eyes on Him and follow His example as we move forward into another year. Paul says, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Can you say the same to those who are watching you?

Tuesday, December 31

Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is not wise to ask such questions. (Ecclesiastes 7:10)

Those who make no goals for 2014 may be tempted to look back at previous years when they had more energy, time, money, purpose, etc. That's why God commands you to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Tomorrow's bread has not been baked yet and yesterday's bread has accomplished its purpose. We have **today** to enjoy the presence of our Lord. Likewise, yesterday's personal accomplishments should have been done for God's glory alone. He has something new for you to look forward to. Can you trust Him enough to focus on **His plans** for you in 2014? If so, this will be your best year ever!

Wednesday, January 1

...But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13b-14)

I featured this verse in a recent devotion (see October 26, 2013), but it is my favorite passage to bring in the New Year. It means so much to me that I quote it each morning as part of my daily prayers. God has called each of us to spend **eternity** with Him, but it is easy to get caught up in the trivial matters of this world (aches & pains, politics, sports, etc.). This passage reminds us, just as others have done in this week's devotions, to focus our time and energy on Jesus and **His plan** for our lives. Our citizenship is in Heaven (see Philippians 3:20) so we should live as strangers on this earth (see 1 Peter 2:11). Can you come up with some New Year's resolutions based on our studies so far this week?

Thursday, January 2

Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62)

This shocking statement from the Lord came after He met three men on life's highway who were not willing to live up to His conditions for discipleship, even though each one gave lip service to wanting to become a follower (see Luke 9:57-61). Likewise, **our** call to walk with Jesus is a **higher calling** than any of the other demands on our lives. Many people, even today, want to be identified as Christians, but they have no desire to follow the teachings of the Lord. As I sometimes say, "That old mule won't plow!" When it comes to serving the Lord, no other priority, no matter how valid, can get in the way. That's why we must do the following: 1) Have a definite goal, 2) Keep our eyes on that goal, and 3) Follow through. Are you beginning to see the value of New Years resolutions?

Friday, January 3

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest fields." (Matthew 9:37-38)

How about this passage to help you set a goal for the New Year? When you begin praying for more workers in the field, He will often show you how **you** can become involved in winning others to Christ. God may not be calling you to go to Africa with Malcolm Warfield, but He is calling you to enlarge your circle of influence in your community. Some of you have introduced your friends to these devotions. That is definitely a good start! Your friends may never meet me, but they already trust you. Look for ways to witness to them. Start by eliminating the gripes that you express in their presence, especially about the operations of the church. You may be surprised at the doors God will open for you in 2014.

Saturday, January 4

"Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." (Romans 10:1)

If you felt any conviction from yesterday's study, I want to challenge you to go a step further. Pray this verse every day, but substitute for "the Israelites" a name of someone you want to influence for the cause of Christ. Pray like this: "My heart's desire and prayer to God for _____ is that he/she may be saved." As you pray daily, you will soon notice that the Holy Spirit has opened a door for you to put legs on your prayers. God has already promised that He will give you the **desires of your heart** (see Psalm 37:3-4). Claim this wonderful promise and make an eternal difference in someone's life this year. It will make a difference in your life too!