

New Year's "Expectations"

Bill Loveless

I remember some years back making new year's resolutions. My record was perfect in that I kept none of them! I don't hear much about people making resolutions anymore. Perhaps, it is because people have lost the desire or will to keep them. However, as a believer, I look at this new year, with some new year's "expectations." The good news is that, unlike resolutions that I would have to keep based on my own self-will, these "expectations" are based upon God's character and upon His essence.

Think about this in terms of the word "hope" as it is defined in the New Testament. Hope means "confident expectation". This hope or confident expectation is based on and backed by the character of God. Therefore, as believers we can look at this new year with a sense of excitement or anticipation of what God is going to accomplish in our lives.

You see, God has assured us that if we abide in Him, He is going to do an eternal work in our lives. It's not that we have a "contingent" God who only functions as we respond to Him. But, we can confidently expect something based upon John 15:7, "*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.*" I would encourage you to meditate on this verse for a moment. Jesus is making a pretty bold statement. The only two contingencies for asking and receiving whatever we wish is that we abide in Him and that His words abide in us.

This begs the question, "If I am abiding in Him and His words are abiding in me, what kinds of things would I ask for and what would be my confident expectation that they will take place?" In the beginning of my Christian life, the focus was on me, my problems, my inadequacies, and my failures. However, I have seen that as I spend more time in this relationship with the Lord, my focus is moving from me to Him. Therefore, I find that as I spend more time abiding in Him, my only desire is for Him. When life revolves around us, then all we seek is relief, deliverance, and safe and secure circumstances. However, as the focus moves from you to Him, then your only desire is for Him, His will, and His purpose in your life. Therefore, "*whatever we wish for*" (John 15:7) becomes a reality in our lives, and it will only be Jesus Himself.

What about our expectations as we abide in Him? You no longer seek relief from your present trouble. The confident expectation is that He will be your peace and rest in the midst of those circumstances. When you are rejected, your expectation is that He will be your acceptance. When you feel unloved, the expectation is that He unconditionally loves you.

Therefore, I would encourage you to see this new year as a year of confident expectation. Abide in Him and His word and "expect" that (only because of His grace) you can have a life that reflects more of Him in you, a life of peace and joy in whatever circumstances you find yourself in, and a life that is filled with unconditional love for those around you.

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