

## A New Year's Resolution

Many of us find ourselves working more and enjoying life less.

*The problem is not a shortage of time, or even a lack of hard work, but a problem of priorities.*

You become anxious when you see all the unfinished tasks that lie before you, and you sense uneasily that you have not done what was important. The demands of other people, situations, and circumstances have driven you onto the sandbar of frustration.

***The danger to which you have succumbed in various ways and in various degrees is letting the urgent things crowd out the important.***

Everyone lives in constant tension between the urgent and the important. The problem is that the important task rarely must be done today or even this week.

Is there any escape from this pattern of living?

The answer lies in the life of Jesus, our Lord. On the night before he died He made an astonishing claim. In His prayer recorded in John 17:4, He says, "I have finished the work which you gave Me to do." He had finished the work His Father gave Him to do. He was done.

Yet on the last night before His death, with many useful tasks undone and urgent human needs unmet, Jesus had peace; He knew that He had finished God's work.

The gospel's record that Jesus worked hard (Mark 1:32-34; 3; 4:37-38).

Yet His life was never feverish. His life showed a wonderful balance, a sense of timing. Jesus did not ruin His gifts by haste.

What was the secret of Jesus' life and work? Mark 1:35 says of Jesus' busy day...*in the morning, a great while before day, He rose and went out to a lonely place, and there He prayed.*"

***He prayerfully waited for His Father's instructions and for the strength to follow them.*** He discerned the Father's will day by day in a life of prayer. By this means He warded off the urgent and accomplished the important.

Lazarus' death illustrates this principle in John 11. What was the urgent need? Obviously to prevent the death of his beloved friend. But the important thing from God's point of view was to raise Lazarus from the dead. So, Lazarus was allowed to die. Later Jesus revived him as a sign of His magnificent claim in 11:25, *I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live.*

Do you see the beauty of this type of life? Jesus' prayerful waiting for God's instructions freed Him from the tyranny of the urgent. It gave Him a sense of direction, set a steady pace, and enabled Him to do every task God assigned. It is no wonder that on the last night He could say, *I have finished the work which you gave Me to do.*

Let Him set you free us from the tyranny of the urgent.

-He points the way: "If you continue in my Word." This is the way to freedom. Only through prayerful meditation on God's Word can we gain His perspective.

-There is one other way we gain God's perspective on this topic, and that's through prayer. The worst sin you can commit is praylessness. The root of all sin is self-sufficiency--independence from God. (Pride; idolatry) When you fail to wait prayerfully for God's guidance and strength you are saying, with your actions if not your lips, that you do not need Him. How much of your service is characterized by "going it alone"?

The opposite of such independence is prayer in which you acknowledge your need of God's guidance and resources. Jesus lived His life in complete dependence upon God. Jesus was fully alive because He was dependent on God.

Prayerful waiting on God is indispensable to effective service in His Kingdom. It enables you to catch your breath and fix new strategy. As you wait for directions the Lord frees you from the tyranny of the urgent. He shows you the truth about Himself, yourself, and your tasks. He impresses on your mind the assignments He wants you to undertake. The need or the task itself is not the call; the call must come from the God who knows your limitations (Psalm 103:13-14).

It is not God who loads you until you bend or crack with an ulcer, nervous breakdown, heart attack, or stroke. These come from your inner compulsions coupled with the pressure of circumstances (Your anxiety).

So, what do you do to sort out the urgent from the important and get your priorities straight? **By prioritizing your relationships with God and others. *Love the Lord your God..., and your neighbor.***

A quiet time of meditation and prayer at the start of the day refocuses your relationship with God. Commit or recommit yourself to His will as you think of the day ahead of you. In these unhurried moments list in order of priority the tasks to be done, taking into account commitments already made. Try to implement the plans you have made before the day's battle against the clock begins, but be open to any emergency interruption or unexpected person who may need you.

In addition to your daily quiet time, set aside one hour a week for spiritual inventory. Write an evaluation of the past, record anything God may be teaching you and plan objectives for the future. Also try to reserve most of one day each month for a similar inventory of longer range.

Often you will fail. Ironically, the busier you get the more you need this time of inventory, but the less you seem to be able to take it. You become like the fanatic, who, when unsure of his direction, doubles his speed. And frenetic service for God can become an escape from God. But when you prayerfully take inventory and plan your days, it provides fresh perspective on your work.

This effort to make adequate time for daily waiting on God, weekly inventory, and monthly planning is the greatest continuing struggle in the Christian life. Since this time for receiving marching orders is so important, Satan will do everything he can to squeeze it out. Yet you know from experience that only by this means can you escape the tyranny of the urgent. This is how Jesus succeeded. He did not finish all the urgent tasks in Palestine or all the things He would have liked to do, but He did finish the work which God gave Him to do.

***The only alternative to frustration is to be sure that you are doing what God wants.***