

New Year's Resolutions

*"Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced.
Therefore have I set my face like a flint,..."*
Isaiah 50:7 (NIV)

"he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."
Luke 9:51 (KJV)

The prophet Isaiah had a most unsuccessful ministry judged by modern standards. He did not "do the numbers" so often spoken of in sales circles today. People did not listen to him as he preached. God had told him at the beginning of his work that he would not have large numbers of people heed his words (Isaiah 6:9-13).

So, for the lonely prophet, a long and difficult life lay ahead of him as he moved among the kings of the country but had his message ignored.

In our verse from Isaiah today we read of the mysterious figure called the Servant of the Lord who would be brutalised by flogging, being spit upon, and having His beard ripped out (Isaiah 50:6). Reading these words we easily recognize their fulfilment in the life of the Lord Jesus. Isaiah, more than any other Old Testament prophet speaks with great clarity of the suffering and subsequent glory of Messiah.

At the beginning of the last year of Jesus' public ministry Luke describes our Lord's mindset. Luke says that Jesus set Himself with determination to go to Jerusalem. The marvellous time

Jesus had spent in the northern province of Galilee where He had grown up was over.

Jesus had preached a sermon one morning that was so offensive to the people that many withdrew and did not attend His preaching and teaching any more (John 6:22-66). As the people turned away from Isaiah hundreds of years earlier so the people turned from the ministry of Jesus as well.

Jesus knew that His time was soon to end with the cross and He resolved fully in His mind to proceed along the path His Father had chosen for Him. That road included humiliation, torment, degradation, death, and finally resurrection. Luke wishes us to understand that though Jesus had a most difficult road to walk in the next few months, He would not shrink from duty but face it head on.

It had been prophesied in Isaiah that the Servant of the Lord would go on His way with a determined spirit. So as we read of how Jesus pursued His course to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51), and death and resurrection, we recognize that He did what was prophesied of Him in every detail.

But how does a person find the ability to go on with a life full of sorrow and difficulties? How did Jesus "set...[his]...face like a flint"? How did He carry on with His mission as He was confronted in so many ways with opposition?

The answer is found in the first part of Isaiah 50:7 where it says, "Because the Sovereign helps me..." (NIV). Jesus had spoken during His earthly ministry of the Father being with Him (John 8:29; 16:32).

So we may face a difficult life ahead of us if we know God is with us. What a remarkable truth to take into the New Year. God is with me! Is this your confidence today? Will you be enabled to face an uncertain New Year because of the truth of God's abiding presence? As long as God is with you no one and nothing shall be able to overcome you.

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