

# Renewing Our Vows

*“When thou shalt  
vow a vow unto the  
LORD thy God,  
thou shalt not  
slack to pay it: for  
the LORD thy God  
will surely require  
it of thee; and it  
would be sin  
in thee.”*

*—Deuteronomy  
23:21*

**For generations, the start of** another year has often been associated with the resolve to set certain new goals. It is thus a proper time to be thinking about making commitments that will improve our lives. As we enter the New Year 2026, many of the Lord’s people will also take the opportunity for solemn

reflection regarding their consecrated walk in newness of life. They will rededicate, refocus, and strive for higher attainments of growth as footstep followers of Jesus, and to be more faithful in carrying out their vows of dedication, sacrifice, and service to the Lord, even unto death.

Turning over a new page on our calendars is an excellent time to reflect on the abundant goodness, mercies, and blessings received from the loving hands of our Heavenly Father during the year now ending. We do so with much joy and thankfulness.

It is also a time to look forward with increased anticipation and hope as we see increasing evidence that Christ's long-promised kingdom is nearer than when we first believed. (Rom. 13:11) We look forward to using our time, talents, and opportunities in new ways to serve our loving Heavenly Father and his people. We also will continue to prepare ourselves to share with him in his ultimate plans and wonderful purpose to bring blessings of life and peace to the poor sin-sick and dying human family, and to provide reconciliation for all of the obedient under the administration of Christ's coming kingdom of peace.

### **Making a Vow**

To "vow" means to make a solemn promise, or pledge, to do a certain thing. When the sincere follower of our Lord Jesus makes a vow, it reflects the heart condition of the brother or sister, and represents a life of total commitment and service to the Heavenly Father. It involves the sacrifice of all that we have and all that we hope to be. (Ps. 50:5; I Pet. 2:5) Making a vow to God must be done with our full heart intention to carry out that pledge and to be faithful to it. David's son Solomon spoke of the seriousness of making vows and faithfully keeping them when he wrote, "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."—Eccles. 5:4,5

### **A Living Sacrifice**

All like-minded children of God are energized by the wise counsel of the Apostle Paul, who wrote,

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:1,2

Paul’s inspiring exhortation to give our lives as a sacrifice to the Heavenly Father is addressed only to those who have fully given their hearts and lives to the Lord and have been justified by the blood of Jesus’ sacrifice. (Rom. 5:8,9; I Pet. 1:18,19) These have been called and selected by God during this present acceptable time of sacrifice. As the ancient high priests of Israel offered themselves to God, so also did Jesus. “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.”—Heb. 7:27,28

The apostle appreciated his privilege to live a life of sacrifice to God. He reminded his beloved Timothy in his letter to him, saying, “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”—II Tim. 2:11-13

## **Highest Priority**

The Apostle Peter spoke of our walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and stressed the importance of making

it our highest priority in life. “By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.”—II Pet. 1:4-7, *English Standard Version*

Continuing, the apostle adds, “Therefore, brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”—vss. 10,11, *Revised Standard Version*

## **Gaining Christ**

Paul wrote a very personal account of his own experiences in his letter to the church at Philippi that are meaningful lessons for us. He said, “Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his

death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”—Phil. 3:7-11, *ESV*

The apostle tells us that he was ready to give up all personal hopes, ambitions, and honors to receive a position of favor with Christ. It should be the same with the Christian. All other interests and earthly advantages have no lasting value. They fade into insignificance in comparison with the heavenly hope, and to attain the divine favor and blessing as “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”—Rom. 8:16,17

## **Jesus Taught in Parables**

An important lesson in connection with how we pay our vows to the Heavenly Father was given to us by the Master when he gave the parable of the talents. “The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.” (Matt. 25:14,15) Since Pentecost, each of Jesus’ consecrated followers has been responsible and accountable to God in accordance with our own several abilities. This is shown in their faithfulness to use what they possess in their service to him, including their time, influence, and opportunity. “If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”—II Cor. 8:12

## **The Five Talents and the Two**

Continuing the parable, Jesus said, “Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." —Matt. 25:16-18

Responsible stewards will seek and find ways and places where they can use the talents they possess that are fully dedicated to the Heavenly Father. They use sanctified wisdom and judgment to their best advantage under the providence and guidance of God's Word. It is our duty to study how we may best use our talents to receive the greatest advantage and bring glory and honor to the Lord. The servant who had one talent did not show proper judgment, but carelessly buried his talent in earthly desires and pursuits, thus indicating a lack of love and appreciation to God for the blessings received from him.

Jesus then said, "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." —Matt. 25:19-23

The statement in the parable that the Lord later reckoned with his servants points to the fact that

each of Jesus' footstep followers are being judged as to their faithfulness in using the talents, abilities, and opportunities afforded them during their walk as Christians. The Apostle Peter said, "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." (I Pet. 4:17) To this thought, Paul added, "We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."—II Cor. 5:9,10

### **The Unprofitable Servant**

Continuing from the parable, we read, "Then the one who had received one talent came forward and said, Master, I knew that you were a hard man, harvesting where you haven't planted and gathering where you haven't scattered any seed. Being afraid, I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here, take what is yours! His master answered him, You evil and lazy servant! So you knew that I harvested where I haven't planted and gathered where I haven't scattered any seed? Then you should have invested my money with the bankers. When I returned, I would have received my money back with interest."—Matt. 25:24-27, *International Standard Version*

The unprofitable servant who had the one talent serves as an important point of reference, as shown in the verses that follow: "Then the master said, Take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the ten talents, because to everyone who has something, more will be given, and he will have more than enough. But from the person who has

[gained] nothing, even what he has will be taken away from him.”—vss. 28,29, *ISV*

Through this parable, Jesus taught that those who fail to use the opportunities and privileges that are available to them to serve God will have these privileges taken from them. They will be given to others who have been faithful in using their talents and opportunities profitably.

## **Satan’s Challenge**

Our Lord Jesus is the ultimate example of total commitment for us to follow. He demonstrated that dedication soon after he was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. It was at that time that the Heavenly Father allowed Satan to tempt him according to the flesh, the world, and the Adversary. The Gospel account reads, “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.”—Matt. 4:1,2

Jesus challenged Satan’s first suggestion that if he were the Son of God he could command that the very stones be made bread to satisfy his hunger. Jesus quickly responded with a scriptural answer, when he proclaimed, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”—Matt. 4:3,4, Deut. 8:3

In his second attempt, Satan quoted a scripture—Psalm 91:11,12—that seemingly assured Jesus that if he were indeed the Son of God, he could cast himself from the pinnacle of the Temple with no fear of harm to himself. Again the Lord turned to a scripture for his answer—one that properly qualified the meaning of that which Satan had deceptively

quoted. Jesus said: “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”—Matt. 4:5-7; Deut. 6:16

Satan’s third attempt against Jesus was to take him mentally to a very high mountain from which they could view all the kingdoms of the world. The Devil offered to give them to Jesus if he would fall down and worship him. However, our Lord answered again, “It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”—Matt. 4:8-10; Deut. 6:13,14

Later the Apostle Paul identified Satan as the god of this present evil world. “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (II Cor. 4:4) When Jesus was before Pilate, he acknowledged that he would have a kingdom, but it would not be “of this world.” He said to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world: ... now is my kingdom not from hence.” (John 18:36) By this we understand that any sharing with Satan in the rule of this present evil world would have been sin on Jesus’ part. Knowing this, the Lord was not duped by Satan’s offer.

## **Preparing for the Warfare**

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul urges, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” (Eph. 6:10-12) The apostle encouraged the brethren

toward greater faith, confidence, and trust in the strength of our Lord. This is especially important at the time in which we now live.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”—vss. 13-17

Putting on the entire armor of God is necessary to protect us from the fiery darts that may come our way, because our warfare is against the prince of darkness and wicked spirits in heavenly places. If Satan realizes that we are well protected and resisting him with the Heavenly Father’s provisions of grace and strength, he will retreat from his attacks, though he will always be watchful to see if we have in any way put aside the Christian armor through lack of vigilance.—James 4:7; I Pet. 5:8,9

## **Facing This Troubled World**

As we enter the New Year 2026, we do so with awareness of the fear and uncertainty that now grips the nations. Within many so-called western countries is increasing polarization of government and people’s views toward nearly every domestic and world issue. This has resulted in increasing political and social unrest and, in some cases, violence and killing. Along a different front, Artificial

Intelligence (AI) is growing exponentially throughout the world. With this are many fears of its use in destructive ways, both against individuals as well as society in general. A gradual weakening of hiring and the job market is also of great concern to many people and families. This concern is exacerbated due to the prospect of AI eliminating vast numbers of jobs as it becomes more widely used.

On the world scene, the Russia-Ukraine war continues without any agreement on a definitive peaceful solution. Though Israel and Hamas recently agreed to a cease-fire and certain other provisions, the situation in Israel and the Middle East in general is still a tinderbox of potential trouble, attacks, and possibly resumption of all-out war. Added to this is increasing antisemitism in many countries, as people and nations are increasingly blaming Israel for the many problems confronting that part of the world. Terrorist organizations still operate in various parts of the world, causing many to fear when and where another attack may come. These, among many other evidences of the growing turmoil in the world as we enter 2026, surely hearken back to Paul's words, "In the last days perilous times shall come." (II Tim. 3:1) How important it is to Christians, therefore, that we all the more recognize the necessity of putting on the whole armor of God, and maintaining our resolve to fight the good fight of faith.—I Tim. 6:12

## **A Daily Reminder**

Many students of the Bible are familiar with the reading of "My Morning Resolve," which has been a wonderful source of daily help and encouragement to many Christians. Let us continue to rejoice

in its wonderful scope of blessings as we strive to make our calling and election sure. We include it here as a reminder of our responsibility and privilege to renew our vows to the Lord now and throughout the New Year just before us.

## **My Morning Resolve**

My earliest thought I desire shall be, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD [for grace to help]. I will pay my vows unto the most High.”—Ps. 116:12-14

Remembering the divine call, “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Ps. 50:5), I resolve that by the Lord’s assisting grace I will today, as a saint of God, fulfil my vows, continuing the work of sacrificing the flesh and its interests, that I may attain unto the Heavenly inheritance in joint-heirship with my Redeemer.

I will strive to be simple and sincere toward all.

I will seek not to please and honor self, but the Lord.

I will be careful to honor the Lord with my lips, that my words may be unctuous and blessed to all.

I will seek to be faithful to the Lord, the Truth, the brethren and all with whom I have to do, not only in great matters, but also in the little things of life.

Trusting myself to divine care and the providential overruling of all my interests for my highest welfare, I will seek not only to be pure in heart, but to repel all anxiety, all discontent, all discouragement.

I will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord’s providence may permit, because,

“Faith can firmly trust him, come what may.” ■