**“YOUR FUTURE UNDER CONSTRUCTION” or**

**“WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING FOR YOUR FUTURE IN HEAVEN?”**

TEXT: Prov. 27:1; Jas. 4:14-15

THESIS: To show that planning ahead, taking God’s will into consideration, can assure a believer of spiritual growth and success in the New Year.

INTRO:

A. “YOUR FUTURE (IS) UNDER CONSTRUCTION” right now! Several things determine your spiritual growth and success in the New Year. This is a great time to assess those areas. It is the traditional time of the year to make resolutions, set goals, etc.

B. Let’s examine 3 basic principles which will help you achieve your goals, keep your resolutions and assure God’s blessings on your life in the New Year.

TRANS: Our texts deal with the elusive concept of “tomorrow” and what it will bring. The implication is that planning for tomorrow without God brings only disaster, heartache, and disappointment.

**I. WHAT YOU WILL BE IS BASED ON WHAT YOU ARE:**

A. Your Spiritual Status:

1. Are you saved? (The answer to this question determines your long-range future -eternity!)

2. Are you separated? (The answer to this question determines your short-range future – no separation from the world, no guarantees for the future.)

NOTE: God knows what is best for us and so he instructs us to keep a safe distance from the world and its allurements, enticements, and temptations. The devil is a master-deceiver and always only shows you 1/2 of the picture. He shows only the pleasure, never the pain, the immediate gratification, never the long-range results. Ex: The teen-age boy and girl in the back of a car, at home alone, etc.; they swap 15 minutes of pleasure for a lifetime of unexpected responsibility. Ex: The Y.P. who trades the “high” of drugs or booze for a fried brain, a broken life, or a ruined family.

3. Are you surrendered? (The answer to this question determines your future usefulness for the Lord and His work.)

ILLUS: A young boy in Kentucky was setting traps for raccoons one night when he accidentally caught his own finger in the ingenious trap. The trap was a hole in a log with nails driven like hooks so that if a raccoon reached in the hole for the bait, it would be impossible to withdraw because it would be impaled on the nails. The boy at first tried to release his finger, but he became more securely impaled. He rested all night on the log and found to his horror that the river was rising and would soon sweep him away and he would drown. He took his knife in his other hand and cut off his finger. He gave up his finger to save his life.

 The Christian may need to give up something he considers necessary or precious to gain something far more important. He may need to surrender some pleasure or his own plans so he can be used of God.

 4. Are you striving? (Setting goals?)

 a. Do you have a growth-goal for the New Year?

 b. Do you have a soul-winning goal for the New Year?

 c. Do you have giving goal for the New Year?

ILLUS: John D. Rockefeller began tithing as a very young boy after his first little job to help support his ailing mother. He had earned $1.50, and his mother urged him to give 10% to the church.

 He did and his testimony was: “from that day I have tithed every dollar God has entrusted to me.

 And I want to say, if I had not tithed the first dollar, I made I would not have tithed the first million dollars I made.

 Tithing is not for the rich. Rich people never begin tithing, but scores of rich people began to tithe when they were poor and became rich. (Henry P. Crowell or Quaker Oats, Mr. Colgate or Colgate Soaps, toothpaste, etc., R.G. LeTourneau who held over 200 patents for equip. he designed...he tithed in reverse, keeping 10% and giving 90% of all his wealth.)

 B. Your Christian Character:

 1. You will be no more in the New Year than you were in the old year, unless you make some character changes.

 2. It is true that most character traits are formed early in life, but it is never too late to change; with Christ all things are possible.

***TRANS: WHAT YOU WILL BE IS BASED ON WHAT YOU ARE!***

**II. WHAT YOU WILL DO IS BASED ON WHAT YOU ARE DOING:**

 A. What Have You Sown?

1. You are today what you sowed yesterday.

2. If you are a midget Christian, it is because you made no commitments to the Lord in the past; your spiritual growth has been stunted.

 B. What Are You Sowing?

1. The “Sowing-Reaping” principle is usually equated with negative activity; but it can be also used to change the future for the good.

2. Start sowing NOW so that your future will be what you and God desire it to be.

ILLUS: Christians who have future hopes to be something or do something great for God have to begin NOW! Now is the only time we have. Tomorrow may alter your future dramatically. Don’t plan your future without the Lord being involved in your planning. (See text) He is the only Absolute in the equation of the believer’s future life.

***TRANS: WHAT YOU WILL BE IS BASED ON WHAT YOU ARE - and - WHAT YOU WILL DO IS BASED ON WHAT YOU ARE DOING - and -***

**III. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IS BASED ON WHAT HAS BEEN PLANNED: (D.V.)**

 A. Biblically: Prophecy

 1. We know the Lord wills the prophetic events of His Word to transpire.

 2. We know that the future is securely resting in His sovereign will.

TRANS: The prophetic events of Scripture are the broad, general outline of God’s plan for man, but each believer is required -within this plan - to operate within God’s will for him/her by seeking daily His direction and trusting in His leadership.

 B. Personally: Planning with God (text)

1. The believer should, each morning, or sometime each day, habitually seek God’s direction.

2. No future plans should be made apart from specifically getting His direction through prayer, the Scriptures and godly counsel from those God has given discernment; usually leaders such as the Pastor, deacons, mature Christians.

3. Once such direction has been secured, however, it is time to set some goals, make some resolutions and purpose to accomplish His will.

CONCL: “YOUR FUTURE IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION” - NOW!

It will be accomplished by…

* WHAT YOU ARE,
* WHAT YOU ARE DOING and
* WHAT HAS BEEN PLANNED in accord with His will. While in the construction stage, you may have to let folks know “temporary in convenience for permanent improvement” or “Please be patient with me God isn’t finished with me yet!” The question is: What on earth are you doing for your future in heaven?