

John 14:1-3 Jesus' Goal in Each New Year! New Year's Eve December 31, 2014

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Grace and peace from God our Father and from Him who is, who was, and is to come, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Amen.

God's Word as we close one year and begin a new one is written in John 14:1-3

These are Your Words heavenly Father to help us keep our priorities in order. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Christian Friends,

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Another year has come to a close. New Year's Eve is a time to reflect on the year past and the year ahead. We have all fallen short of God's perfect laws this past year and need God's forgiveness. So often we didn't make good choices but committed sins instead. We would like to be optimistic about the new year. Hopefully we will pray more often and ask God to guide us in His Word. But, the sinful world in which we live isn't going to make living as Christians any easier. A recent Barna poll reports that of people claiming to be Christians three years ago 10% believe the Bible is just a book of stories and it is not God's Word. Now, three years later almost 20 % of people claiming to be Christians reject the Bible as being from God. Is it any wonder that the moral foundations of our nation are being destroyed and the devil is trying to harm Christians along with it? With evil happening around us we're tempted to doubt or worry about what might happen in this new year. Jesus' disciples were about the face a trouble beyond anything we will experience. Jesus had told them that they would be separated from Him, see Him captured and tortured by His enemies, be crucified and buried. But, they were to trust God's plan for good. For a short time they would have trouble and danger, but it would not last.

Jesus completed God's plan because His goal was directed by God's purpose and will. The sacrifice He made and the benefits we receive because of it far outweigh life's troubles. Jesus' words are for our encouragement as we face an unknown future in this new year, because our long-term future is certain in Him. Today, we'll consider:

Jesus' Goal for Each New Year!

Jesus had heaven in mind. He knew that as good as life was with His disciples, it could not compare to the glory of heaven. But what obstacles He went through to get there! How did Jesus endure so many temptations without sin and finish His work? First, He practiced what He preached.

In verse one He said literally, "*Stop letting your hearts be troubled. Trust in God.*" Jesus had a perfect faith and confidence in God to bring Him safely home. He knew *Psalm 16*. "*You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*" (*Psalm 16:10-11*) The thought of the joy ahead was more than enough for Jesus to finish the work that God called Him to do.

The greatest thing which kept Jesus on goal was His love. His love for His heavenly Father motivated Him to live a perfectly pleasing life for Him. He also loved people. He was compassionate for all who were ill or injured and for the whole world of sinners. Jesus laid down His life to pay for all sins. He let nothing to stand between us and God. He could speak the words of encouragement in our verses because it depended solely on His work being completed.

Second, Jesus' going to the Father reminds us of our goal. Each year our goals may change: i.e. get through school, get a job, get married, and have a family and later to improve job positions, look forward to grandchildren and to retire. But there is much more to life. Our ultimate goal is to be in heaven with God as our loving Father. God created people to be with Him. Without Him we are not complete. As we end another year, we rejoice that we are one year closer to being made whole in heaven.

Here we experience trouble and temptations. Sometimes our sins make us feel that we don't have a right to be with God, even with Christ as our Savior. Our faith weakens. Jesus' disciples were about to desert Him as He was captured. They needed Christ's Word to restore them. We also have things happen in our lives which tempt us to turn away from God and heaven. But Jesus promised *"I am going there to prepare a place for you."* (John 14:2) Despite our sins and the evil that surrounds us, Jesus had made us children of God and has opened heaven to be our home! He promised that in His Father's house are many permanent places to live. Here, we are reminded that nothing is permanent in this world and in time will be lost. But, Christ won a lasting place in heaven for us. The devil tries to crush us and will do whatever he can to discourage us. But Paul wrote, *"We are heirs... of God and co-heirs with Christ.... I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."* (Romans 8:17-18)

We need to pray that Jesus help us keep our goal in mind! Our journey to our heavenly Father may be rough and our burdens heavy, but we are not alone. God will give us the strength we need. He has the power and love for any situation. Jesus proved to His disciples that nothing is impossible with God!

With heaven as our certain future home, God gives us another goal. To warn more people who are living as if there were no God that they will be lost forever without Christ. Jesus warned, *"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul?"* (Mark 8:36) Jesus died for all people, and we know from God's Word that He wants all to be saved. So, just as Jesus dedicated His life to bring us to heaven, so we dedicate our lives to help others get there. We can't believe for others. But, Christ has given us a means to get people to Him. Every time we bring a child to baptism, the Holy Spirit is powerfully working faith in the child for eternal life. The Bible promises, *"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."* (Galatians 3:26-27) Every time we Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are receiving the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' body and blood. He gives us power to endure the troubles and uncertainties of life so that at the end of the world we can take our stand with Christ! *"The Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe."* (Romans 1:16)

Since we are going to the Father, we thank God for seeing us through this past year and keeping us in the saving faith. Despite the evil and for our good, God has sent His Son to prepare us for heaven. We can be confident in Jesus so that we can stop worrying. Jesus is with us in this new year! He met His goal to prepare a place for us in heaven and He is still leading us in this new year to keep us in the way that leads to our permanent home! Time seems to be rushing us into a new year, but in Christ a time is coming when there will be no more time, when we will no longer consider each new year. But, for now, in Christ, we are a year closer to life in the fullest in heaven. May the past year remind us to keep looking ahead, not just to 2015, but to Jesus and to the place He has prepared for us in heaven. Amen.