

SINCE I DIDN'T WRITE IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS I HOPE EVERYONE HAD A WONDERFUL TIME AND WAS ABLE TO SPEND IT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS. AND I HOPE THE COMING YEAR WILL BE YOUR BEST SO FAR. NOT ONLY ECONOMICALLY AND PHYSICALLY, BUT SPIRITUALLY AS WELL.

A LOT OF THAT WILL DEPEND ON US. THERE ARE SOME THINGS OUT OF OUR CONTROL, BUT IF WE WILL CONTINUE TO BE OBEDIENT, THEN HE WILL CONTINUE TO EXPAND OUR BORDERS AND WE WILL FIND FAVOR WITH HIM.

I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE TO MAKE NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS, BUT I'M MAKING ONE THIS YEAR. ITS NOT TO LOSE WEIGHT OR BREAK A BAD HABIT, (WHICH I WOULD GUESS IS THE MOST COMMON ONES), BUT WHAT I NEED, WHAT I WANT, IS TO BE AT PEACE WITH MY LORD DAILY. I COULD STAND TO LOSE SOME WEIGHT, AS WELL AS WORKING ON A BAD HABIT OR TWO (NOT THE LEAST OF THESE IS DISCIPLINE), BUT TO LIVE SO CLOSE TO GOD THAT YOU CAN FEEL HIS SPIRIT THROUGHOUT EACH DAY, HIS LOVE WASHING OVER YOU, HIS PEACE, THAT'S MY GOAL.

IS THAT AN ATTAINABLE GOAL? IS IT POSSIBLE TO LIVE THAT CLOSE TO GOD DAILY? IF YOU READ THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF HEBREWS IT SURE SOUNDS LIKE IT. ALL IT TAKES IS FAITH. BUT HOW CAN I HAVE THAT MUCH FAITH? THE FIRST TWO VERSES OF CHAPTER TWELVE TELLS US TO USE THOSE MENTIONED IN CHAPTER ELEVEN AS EXAMPLES, THEN TO LAY DOWN THE THINGS THAT WEIGH US DOWN, THEN TO NOT GIVE UP RUNNING THE RACE, TO GO TO JESUS DAILY.

I'M NOT SO NAIVE AS TO THINK THERE WO'NT BE DAYS THAT I'LL FEEL DOWN OR FEEL LIKE GOD IS NOWHERE NEAR ME, BUT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT IS A DAILY VICTORIOUS LIFE IN CHRIST WHERE HE CAN USE ME AS HE SEES FIT.

NONE OF US REALLY HAS AN EXCUSE NOT TO BE WALKING CLOSE TO THE LORD, BUT I FEEL THAT I ESPECIALLY DO NOT. I HAVE A LOT MORE TIME THAN MOST TO SPEND WITH HIM, YET SOME DAYS I DON'T COMMUNICATE WITH HIM AT ALL. SOME DAYS I READ FICTION ALL DAY OR DO MINDLESS THINGS THAT DO NOT BENEFIT ME AT ALL. IT MAKES NO SENSE AND I WONDER WHY I DO IT BUT ALL I COME UP WITH IS LAZINESS.

I'LL START THE NEW YEAR WITH A FAST, I DO THAT EVERY YEAR. IT WORKS FOR ME, THE MORE I FAST THE MORE I NEED TO FAST. BUT I FIND THAT TRUE WITH ALL THINGS SPIRITUAL - THE MORE I PRAY THE MORE I NEED TO, THE MORE I STUDY THE MORE I FEEL I FALL SHORT IN STUDYING. BUT I WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU ALL TO THINK ABOUT DOING IT AS WELL. AFTER ALL JESUS COMMANDED US TO FAST, IN MATT. 6:16-17 TWICE JESUS SAID WHEN YOU FAST NOT IF YOU FAST. IN MATT. 17:14-21 JESUS TELLS HIS DISCIPLES THAT ONLY BY FASTING- AND PRAYER COULD THEY HAVE THE POWER TO CAST OUT DEMONS. JESUS HIMSELF HAD TO FAST BEFORE HE WENT TOE TO TOE WITH SATAN.

BEFORE I SIGN OFF I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR CARDS AND LETTERS BUT MOSTLY FOR YOUR PRAYERS, I KNOW THAT THEY CARRY ME THROUGH MANY DAYS. I HAD WONDERFUL VISITS WITH MY MY GIRLS AND JOSEPH, (AND MOM AND ALL THE REST, YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE) IT FELT LIKE YEARS INSTEAD OF MONTHS SINCE I HAD SEEN A.J., WE BOTH NEEDED THAT.

ENJOY THE PIC.

JOE