

[FB Meyer](#)

A NEW YEAR is opening before us, and there is some satisfaction in feeling that an opportunity will be afforded of making a really new start. Each true heart in which there is a spark of the Divine life turns eagerly towards the unblemished page, the untrodden way, of the New Year, not with wonder simply, or with hope, but with fervent resolve that the dead past shall bury its dead, and that a nobler, fuller, sweeter spirit shall glisten in the chalice of existence, Years ago, in Leicester, I was accustomed to go into the great workshops and factories with my pledge-cards on the first day of the New Year, because it was comparatively easy to induce men to make a new start with the New Year. It was in the air.

But it is of little purpose merely to wish and resolve; let us see whether there should not be a definite dealing with mistakes and sins which have lain at the root of the withered gourds that represent the years of the past. If once we could make a new departure in respect to these, there would be some reason for counting on a permanent betterment for all coming time.

Debt is a fruitful source of misery and failure. You may owe more than you may care to tell your dearest friend; you dare not pass along certain thoroughfares for fear of encountering individuals whom you have put off with repeated promises that you have not kept; and you hardly dare to open your letters in the morning lest they should contain some stinging remonstrance or threat. Your weekly or monthly wages are pledged before you receive them, and are gone like a flake of snow on the river. All this is very miserable, and must be dealt with. Do not, however, lose heart. Worse troubles than this have been overcome by faith, resolution, and an earnest, sincere purpose.

Take my advice. First, kneel down and confess the sin and mistake of the past to God, and ask his help. Next, put down a list of your entire indebtedness, and make a confidant of wife, or husband, or parent, or friend, not necessarily to gain their pecuniary assistance, but that you may have their sympathy and fellowship. Further, look around your life to see if there is any means of reducing present expenses, or of selling articles of superfluity and luxury in order to reduce your indebtedness. Lastly, make a solemn resolution not to incur a single sixpence of needless expense till every penny you owe is paid. Let this be your new start, and henceforth let it be your rule, to make no purchase and incur no liability which is not easily within your means; Evil and expensive habits drain away the strength of our lives and becloud the inner horizon. Is it not with the individual as with the state? Supposing it were possible to stay the extravagant expenditure of our people in Drink, Tobacco, and Horse-racing, would not squalor, want, and misery, and all their gaunt tribes, which have settled down on our vast populations as a horde of Kurds, fold up their tents, and begone? And, on a small scale, are not similar evils repeating similar ravages on isolated souls, perhaps on yours? Would it not be an immense gain in every way, if you were to give up your Drink and Tobacco, and employ the money and time which these consume in procuring books, pursuing some hobby, planning for a good summer vacation, or engaging in wholesome and health-giving recreations?

In our school days, when running in matches, we used to begin fairly well clothed; but as we ran, and found ourselves slowly losing ground, we tore off one article after another in our anxiety to reach the goal; and the course was littered with ties, collars, and other articles. Similarly, in the great race of life, the flight of the years should be marked by the weights and sins that we have laid aside. Each new year would be enriched by the needless extravagances we had learned to forego. We should run lighter, breast the stormy waves with less encumbrance, and stand a better chance of getting beyond the rabble that clamor at the mountain-foot, to stand among the rarer spirits on the higher ranges. May I not prevail on you to make some such sacrifice with the opening of the New Year? It would be a new start indeed!

Bad companions have made havoc with the past. Women who are perpetually dropping in to gossip; neighbors whose ways of spending Sunday have introduced a new laxity into your family; men who talk lightly of God, and women, and the Ten Commandments.

Most insidiously they have been eating away and deteriorating your nobler life, like the percolation of water into the cliffs, which ultimately splinters their strong sides. The time must come, if you are to save yourself, when such parasites must be dropped off. There is no alternative to save yourself from going farther with them, than to rid yourself of their society. It may seem hard, but it is as imperative and urgent as cauterizing a bite from a mad dog. With bad companions dismiss bad books, that leave a rotten taste, that disincline you to quiet holy thought, that poison the springs of love and home. And to the renunciation of these add all conversation, pastimes, and places of amusement which shrivel the soul, as gas does the plants that wither beneath its blighting touch. This would be a new start indeed!

Laxity in your religious life has, without doubt, had something to do with past failure. As long as the bright summer sun shines into the forest glades, the fungus has no chance to flourish; but when the sunshine wanes, in the months of autumn, the woods are filled with these strange products of decay. It is because we drift from God that our lives are the prey to numberless and nameless ills. Make the best of M1 new starts, and returning to the more earnest habits of earlier days, or beginning them from now, give yourself to God, believing that he will receive and welcome you, without a word of remonstrance or a moment of interval. Form habits of morning and evening prayer; especially in the morning get time for deep communion with God, waiting at his footstool, or in the perusal of the Bible, till he speaks to you. Take up again your habits of attendance at the house of God; in the morning and the evening go with the multitude that, with the voice of praise, keeps holy day; and in the afternoon find some niche Of Christian service, in your home or elsewhere. Then, inasmuch as you do not wish to be a slip-carriage, which, when the couplings are unfastened, runs for a little behind the express, but gets slower and slower till it comes to a stand, ask the grace of the Holy Spirit to confirm these holy desires, keeping you true to them, causing you to be steadfast, immovable, and set on maintaining life on a higher level. In all these ways let the new year witness a fresh start.