

COUNTING

Text: Genesis 15:5

INTRO: One clear night long ago, God brought Abraham outside & said, "Look now toward heaven, & count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So will your descendants be." (Genesis 15:5).

That promise was fulfilled so that the Hebrew writer says in Heb. 11:12, "Therefore from one man, & him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore."

Abraham couldn't count the stars. Centuries later, the Hebrew writer still couldn't count the stars. Now, after almost 2,000 more years, we still can't count the stars. Telescopes didn't help us count the stars--they just helped us realize more fully that the stars are innumerable.

As we begin a new year, I want to direct your attention to some things the Bible says about counting.

NOTE: illustrate with story brother Furr told about the preacher who didn't say what he was talking about. I'm going to talk about some things that count, some things we must learn to count, and some things we can count on.

I. SOME THINGS THAT REALLY COUNT.

A. When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth he noted that the congregation was troubled over the use of special gifts & abilities that some of the members possessed. Misuse of these gifts produced envy, jealousy & confusion. Tho Paul said nothing to detract from the importance of their spiritual gifts, there are things that count more--things that were available to each of them--and to us.

READ I CORINTHIANS 12:31 THRU 13:3, 13.

B. Matt. 23:23, "Woe to you, scribes & Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint & anise & cumin, & have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice & mercy & faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

II. SOME THINGS WE MUST LEARN TO COUNT.

- A. Our blessings, James 1:17.
- B. We must learn to count the cost. READ LUKE 14:25-33.
 - 1. Nothing of value comes without cost. Freedom isn't free. Life is made up of decisions to pursue one course at the expense of another.
 - 2. In counting the cost, we must learn to look at more than the initial price tag. NEW CAR: Sticker price, TTL, insurance, operating cost, etc.

bottle of wine; package of cigarettes

Becoming a Christian. Not becoming a Christian.

III. THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON.

A. God. You can always count on God. You can't count on Him to fulfill your every whim & obey your every command--but you can count on God to bring about what is best for you if you love Him & obey His will, Romans 8:28.

B. Truth. You can count on truth. Truth has nothing to fear from honest investigation. The world was never flat, but men once thought it was. Investigation proved to be a friend of the truth. Keep an open mind. God's word, the Bible, is the ultimate truth in the area of utmost importance, JN 17:17.

C. You can count on death & judgment, Heb. 9:27. Every one of you have friends or loved ones, younger than you are, who are no longer in the land of the living. No one knows if he will live to be 70 or 80, perhaps a little older--or if he will be among those who die young. But you can be sure of death, & after that, the judgment. This serious consideration should impress upon our minds the importance of counting the cost of the way we choose to live.

CONCLUSION: This may be a good time to briefly reflect on our mistakes & accomplishments of 1991, but mostly, it is a time to look forward to the opportunities, hopes, plans, and goals we can reach, with God's help in the coming months and years.

Today we face a challenge to rise up & meet whatever the future may hold. Let us resolve within our hearts that with the help of Almighty God, that uncertain future will be met successfully, just as the challenges of yesterday. It was a wise man who said, "I do not know what the future holds, but I know Who holds the future."

What is tomorrow? It is the result of the decisions I make & the work I do today. May God bless you, & with His help, may tomorrow be what you dream it should be.

Baccalaureate, La Porte, TX, High School, May 27, 1984

Exton, PA, January 1, 1989

Wrightsville, PA, January 20, 1991

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, December 29, 1991

Cemetery Homecoming, Liberty Hill, TX, May 1, 1994

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, January 4, 1998