

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

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[0 : 00] Please take a copy of God's Word and join me in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1.! Once before on the last Lord's Day of the year, and I do want you to know that the question was asked of our elders, should I do that again?

And they thought, yes, this will be helpful, so I hope it will be to you. This week we celebrate the arrival of a new year.

I'm thankful for that. There's been some tough things about this past year, and while on the one hand we will only be another day into another journey around the sun.

Why even mark it out this particular way? But on the other hand, there's something seemingly significant about passing from a year into another.

We rarely write checks anymore, right? Not much really changes, but something in our mind seems to as we close out one and enter another.

[1 : 26] Doesn't it feel like we're turning a page in a book, closing the chapter that we call 2025 and opening the chapter we will call 2026?

It feels like the future, doesn't it? Doesn't it feel like an opportunity for a fresh start? Because of the grace of God to us in Jesus Christ, we always have the opportunity to start afresh.

But our minds are often drawn to make new commitments at the beginning of the year that are often called resolutions. We are surrounded by people making resolutions and suggestions for resolutions.

So this morning, my prayer for us is that we can look to God's word together and consider how we can make resolutions that please him. Some have asked if resolutions are biblical.

Should we make promises to change? And I say to you, yes, we most certainly should. To believe in change is Christian.

[2 : 36] We are a people who have been changed from enemies of God into his friends because we have placed our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Further, we have set for us a pattern in the Bible of God's people making promises that are pleasing to him.

Let me give you just two examples and then we'll turn our attention to today's text. First, Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the Babylonian king's food or wine.

Daniel chapter 1 and verse 8. That was a resolution. Paul resolved to make his way to Jerusalem to fulfill a vow he had made, a Nazarite vow.

Acts chapter 19 and verse 21. So, let us resolve to change, believing that change is really possible.

It's not a person in this room that doesn't need to change in some way. May we do so, not just at the first of the year, but may we do so at the first of the year and may we do so in a way that pleases our God.

[3 : 48] Second Thessalonians chapter 1. I'll read verse 11 and 12. Let me pray for us before I do. Father, we thank you very much this morning for your word.

The opportunity we have to open it up and to take it up. We pray that you would help us to do so together well this morning. We want to rightly understand it.

We want to give it the proper application to each of our lives. We humbly recognize that it was written for your glory and for our good. We want to believe its promises.

We want to obey its commands. We want to have affection for you, its author. And so we ask that you would help us to do this. In Christ's name, amen.

2 Thessalonians 1, beginning in verse 11. To this end, we always pray for you that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power.

[4 : 49] So that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a fairly simple outline for our text this morning.

Number one, resolve to be holy. Number two, resolve dependently. And number three, resolve for the glory of Christ.

At the age of 19 and across some time, a young follower of Jesus Christ penned 70 resolutions. Promises aimed at God's glory and his good.

The first resolution reads, and this is somewhere near the back of your bulletin. He writes, Resolved, What a resolution.

This young man's name was Jonathan Edwards. I didn't write like that when I was 19 and still don't at 45.

[6 : 25] Jonathan wrote this astounding work, which I commend to you to look up and spend some time with. In the preamble of his resolutions, he wrote the following, and this is found in the sermon note section of your bulletin this morning.

Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God's help. I do humbly entreatment. I do humbly entreat him by his grace to enable me to keep these resolutions so far as they are agreeable to his will for Christ's sake.

And it is my intention this morning to weave Edwards' poignant preamble phrase that I just read to you through our text to set for us an example of application for how it is that we ought to make resolutions.

So number one, resolve to be holy. If you make resolutions that are not aimed at your holiness, then you are setting your sights too low.

If conformity to Jesus Christ is not the end goal of all that we do as Christians, then we are failing miserably short of that which God has called us to.

[7 : 45] Holiness is our high calling in Christ Jesus. It's what we ought to be aiming at. Having been set free from sin, we ought to be aiming at holiness.

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1, verse 13 and following, Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that we brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Since it is written, Leviticus 11, 44, you shall be holy for I am holy. In our text, I first want to draw your attention to the specific what that Paul prays for the Thessalonian believers in his second letter to them.

He says, verse 11, To this end, we always pray for you. To what end? What is it that he is praying for him? That our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith.

[9 : 05] It is not an aimless prayer. It's not a general, generic prayer. He's got a point that he's making here.

He's not primarily concerned about their circumstances, that they would have jobs or find houses or be in good health. All things that can and should be prayed for.

But rather, primarily, firstly, he is concerned about their holiness. He's aiming his prayers at the way they ought to be aimed.

Two specific things that he praised for. That God would make them worthy of his calling. Some translations say, count you worthy.

Paul's prayer is that they are, in fact, counted worthy of God's saving call. Which is evidenced in the practice of their faith.

[10 : 05] Right? Not that their work saved them, but their faith that saves them is a faith that works. And he also prays that God would work in them by his power to fulfill every resolve.

There's the word for good and every work of faith. Right? You could translate the word resolve that we see here in the ESV as desire.

Right? Every intention, every desire, every press for, aim at good works of faith. This was a consistent concern of Paul's for those who claimed to follow Jesus Christ.

Because the fervent pursuit of holiness is a marker of those who are truly converted. Don't lose sight of our text in 2 Thessalonians.

You can stay there, but let me show you how concerned Paul was with the holiness of those who profess to follow Christ. By looking at the prayers he mentions in four other epistles.

[11 : 10] 1 and 2 Corinthians. This is chapter 13. First part of verse 7. But we pray to God that you may not do wrong. Right?

The positive implication of that is that you do right. And then verse 9 of chapter 13. Your restoration is what we pray for.

Right? If they have sinned, that they would be restored and would be then again found righteous. To the Philippians chapter 1 verse 9 and 10. He says, To the Philippians chapter 1 verse 9 and following.

And so from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you. Asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

Fully pleasing to him. Bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might. For all endurance and patience with joy.

[12 : 25] And then to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians chapter 3. Verse 11. Now may our God and Father himself, our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you.

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you. So that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father.

At the coming of our Lord Jesus with his saints. And then chapter 5 and verse 23. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely.

And may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is very concerned about this. That people who profess faith in Christ.

Evidence faith in Christ. By the pursuit of holiness. Is it okay to have goals this year not aimed at holiness?

- [13 : 27] Just a quick little pause. It's fun sometimes when autocorrect corrects my words and I don't catch it. The sentence that I wrote reads, Is it okay to have goals for this year not aimed at hotness? Holiness is what I meant to type when I wrote that.
- Is it okay to have goals for this year not aimed at holiness? Of course it is. Of course it is. But don't give attention to and energy to your health or habits or professional hopes.
- Without paying attention to and giving energy to your holiness. Don't have disordered resolutions this year. First aim them at holiness.
- Let that be the primary thing that you're thinking about and toward. Jonathan Edwards. Back to his preamble. He said this. Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God's help.
- I do humbly entreat him by his grace to enable me to keep these resolutions. And then what did he hope for his resolutions? So far as they are agreeable to his will.
- [14 : 41] He wanted to resolve to do things in his life that were what God wanted him. To do. Right? He was aiming his resolves at holiness.
- Again, Edwards resolves. I greatly encourage you to look them up. See the way this young man was thinking. They were aimed at his character. His personal habits for holiness.
- His relationships. And his service. Now. I'm just going to give you two examples of my own for this year. Things I've been thinking about.
- Things I want to resolve to do. One is the same as last year. I don't know that I did this all that well in 2025.
- So I'm resolving once again. First resolve. To spend more time praying for. And praying with. My family.
- [15 : 40] I don't do enough of this. I'm aware of this. I want to more regularly plead before God for the sake of my family. Second.
- Resolve. Often when I've done this before. I have a goal in mind for how many books that I intend to read. I didn't do the goal I had set for this past year.
- Although I think that was okay. I made some alterations to it. This year though. I want to read more books with people. Last year I intended to read 50 books.
- I think I read like 36. But I want to read more with people this year. I'm currently reading a book with a group of men. I've just been enjoying it so very much. I want to do more of that in this next year.
- I've got some plans with my sons. And with my wife. And I'll be floating some opportunities out with some of you. I want to read more books with people. So two examples.
- [16 : 40] Of ways that I'm aiming resolutions at holiness in this next year. So resolve to be holy. That's point number one. Secondly.
- Resolve dependently. So resolve to be holy. But do so dependently. You are powerless to change yourself in any meaningful way.
- Have you heard of queer? That Friday at the end is called Quitter's Friday. Because most people abandon all of their resolutions by that time. There's such clear evidence that we are powerless to change ourselves.
- Even when it comes to the simplest of habits. Eat less sugar. We have a difficult time with this. We're certainly powerless to change ourselves in any really meaningful, eternal way.
- But God is all powerful. And desires to change you into the image of his son. If you belong to him.

[17 : 44] This is where he is aimed. We have to do the same. And we ought to do so dependently. Asking for the grace necessary to change for his glory and our good.

This is why Paul so readily prays for the church. I've given you a bunch of examples from our text today. And otherwise. He's praying and he's praying and he's praying. He's asking that God would do this work.

Because he knows that only God brings about meaningful change. Verse 11 of our text. To this end. We always pray for you.

That our God may make you worthy of his calling. May fill every resolve for good. And every work of faith. By his power. So that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you.

And you in him. According to the grace of our God. And the Lord Jesus Christ. Those two verses are just packed with that language. Paul's confidence that God can and will work on behalf of his people for holiness.

[18 : 53] Paul wrote elsewhere. Philippians chapter 2. Verse 12 and 13. Therefore my beloved. As you have always obeyed. So now not only in my presence. But much more in my absence. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

We want to see that there's an effort found in verse 12. Right? We're meant to work at this. Working out salvation. But we can't forget verse 13.

It should never be divorced from verse 12. For it is God who works in you. Both to will and to work. For his good pleasure.

Meaningful change takes effort on our part. And it takes the grace. Firm belief as a church in God's sovereignty.

In his power. In his providence. It's good. I think that's generally true. I don't think I have to spend a lot of time convincing you of that. But a very probable error is that then we don't do anything.

[19 : 57] We don't make any effort to change. We don't work at the things that we're commanded to do. We should work all the time as if it entirely depends on us.

And rely on God all the time to supply for all that he commands. This is not a paradox. If we resolve to be holy.

We can have confidence that God will work in our working toward that great end. Again Edwards. He says in his preamble.

This is the chunk of his preamble. Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God's help. I do humbly entreat him by his grace.

To enable me to keep these resolutions. So resolve to be holy. Do so dependently. And thirdly. Resolve for the glory of Christ.

[20 : 56] Why did Paul want to see the Thessalonian believers grow in holiness? What was the point of his desire for them?

And you see that at the beginning of verse 12. So that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you.

That Christ would be praised as we grow in holiness. Resolutions aimed at making you a better you. Miss them.

Not the glory of Christ. In your intentions you've made yourself a God. And you've bowed before your throne. A resolution to be healthy.

For example. Fall short if it is merely for your image. For your hotness. It's aimed properly.

[21 : 53] Make resolutions for your health. Hear me. It's aimed properly. When you want to be healthy. To give yourself in service to others. I want to be healthy.

I want to do the things I can do to be fit. To think clearly. To have an able body. So that I can give myself in service to others. For the glory of Christ.

Samuel Rutherford. Puritan preacher. Once said. Build your nest upon no tree here. For you see. God has sold the forest. To death.

There is no point. Invest in the eternal. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. In verse 31. So whether you eat or drink.

Or whatever you do. Do all to the glory. Of God. And in Colossians chapter 3. In verse 17. And whatever you do. In word or deed. Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

[22 : 50] Giving thanks to God the Father. Through him. It is the high calling. And the greatest joy of the Christian.

To know God. And to make him known. Everything we do. Should be aimed off in this direction. So as we make resolutions. To be holy. Depending on him.

And as he accomplishes this. In our lives. He gets much praise. For it. Peter wrote. 1 Peter chapter 2. Verse 9 and following.

You are a chosen race. A royal priesthood. A holy nation. A people. For his own possession. That you may proclaim. The excellencies of him. Who called you out of darkness.

Into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people. But now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy. But now you have received mercy. Beloved.

[23 : 43] I urge you as sojourners. And exiles. To abstain from the passions of the flesh. Which wage war. Against your soul. Keep your conduct. Among the Gentiles. Honorable. So that when they speak against you.

As evildoers. They may see your good deeds. And glorify God. On the day. Of visitation. Aimed at holiness. Dependently. For the glory of Christ.

Edwards preamble. Ends. For. Christ's. Sake. Being sensible. That I am unable to do anything. Without God's help. I do humbly entreat him.

By his grace. To enable me to keep these resolutions. So far as they are agreeable. To his will. For. Christ's. Sake. So resolve to be holy.

Resolve to be holy. Dependently. And resolve. To be holy. Dependently. For the glory. Of Christ. Christ. So in conclusion. As I have done before.

[24 : 40] I would like to ask you. A series of questions. My notes say seven questions. But there are seven questions. With a bunch of questions that follow. So. Categorically. Seven questions.

For the sake of. Application. And I want you to think. I would just challenge you. To actually spend a little bit of time. Thinking about this now. And then perhaps. Much more time. In the coming week.

Number one. What about you. Most. Needs to change. What about you. Most. Needs. To change.

What sins. Seem to ensnare you. You keep going back to. Again. And again. A thing you just. Seem to not be able. To kick off.

What needs to change. Most. About you. What habits. Do you neglect. Do you read your bible. Enough. Do you pray.

[25 : 36] Enough. Are you in good Christian fellowship. Enough. How are your church attendance. Habits. Are you regularly sharing the gospel. Do you work hard.

Do you. Rest. Well. What about you. Most need to change. Secondly. Why. Would you like to change. Something.

Popped in your mind. Something about you. That needs to change. What motivates. That change. Why would you like. To change. Is your desire. To change. For God's glory. And your good.

Or is it just selfish. For your. Glory. Thirdly. Thirdly. How. Are you going. To change. This is that effort part.

What is the plan. To change. There's never been a thing. In my life. That I thought was a good thing. That needed to be done. And then somehow. It just happened. Ever.

[26 : 37] Everything that is important. Seems to me. For me. Need to be written down. Put on a calendar. Some sort of a plan. Needs to be put in place. I need a strategy.

For fighting sin. I got to be aimed. I got to have. It's coming up. I know it's coming. I got to have a response. To the thing. What's the plan.

How. Are you going to change. Empowered by God's grace. What are you going. To do. To change. Fourth. What is most likely.

To prevent. Your change. What are the obstacles. That you anticipate. Getting in the way. Of your. Effort. For holiness. What circumstances.

Needs to change. In order for you. To change. You might be in a circumstance. That needs to change. Itself. So that you can. Change. Your schedule. Would be an example. Maybe.

[27 : 35] Your friend group. Have you failed to change. So many times. In the past. That you're afraid. To even. Try. I encourage you not.

To do so. Fifth. What truths. Do you need to believe. In order. To. Change. Maybe.

Just the fact. That God. Does in fact. Graciously work. In the lives. Of his people. Something that you need. To take hold of. Philippians chapter 1. Verse 6. Paul says. I am sure of this.

That he who began. A good work in you. Will bring it. To completion. At the day. Of Jesus Christ. Paul has a great confidence. In God's. Sanctifying. Power.

In our lives. I am sure. Of. This. Do you. Feel that way. I am sure of this. That he who began. A good work. In me. Will bring it. To completion. At the day.

[28 : 30] Of Jesus Christ. Perhaps. Your. Failure. To change. Across this past year. Is discouraging. To you. For. The next year. And you need. To be reminded. Romans 8.

1. There is therefore. Now no. Condemnation. For those. Who are in. Christ Jesus. God sees you. If you are in Christ. When God sees you.

He sees. Jesus. Clothed. In his. Righteousness. You have put on. The perfect work. Of Christ. And so you have. Such reason.

To stand before God. And to. To entreat him. To work. In you. To have confidence. That he will. Work in you. There is no. Condemnation. For you. And so. What a joy.

It is then. To get to work. To obey. Your heavenly. Father. As you are his child. Sixth. Are you.

[29 : 27] Committed. To change. Right. Change will take work. On your. Part. I made this. Case. Effort has to go. Into it. Make a plan. Anticipate the.

Possible. Obstacles. In the way. It is going to take. Work. Are you ready. Are you ready. To get to work. To change. And then lastly.

How can I. How can we. How can this church. Help you. Change. Right. Share with somebody. Get with somebody. Tell them what you are doing.

Ask for prayer. Ask for accountability. Tell them the truth. You need them. To speak to you. Because you have a hard time. Believing them. Think about ways. That you can be helped. And let's.

Change. Together. In 2026. Let's resolve. Providence Baptist Church. To be holy. Dependently. For the glory of Christ.

[30 : 26] Let's pray.