

Resolutions

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[0 : 00] A completely unobvious or obvious statement, not unobvious. Obvious statement is we have no idea what 2012 is going to bring us.! 2012 might bring movies that change the way we think.

It might bring music that will question or challenge what we believe. It might bring loss in our lives that will question our convictions.

And it might bring gain that will challenge our fortitude and our faith. Do we believe, do we need God, in other words? 2012 could also be a year where we find contentment no matter our situation. It could be a year where we have victory over a specific sin that has haunted us and we've struggled with so much for such a long time.

It could be a year where we find strength in our weakest moments. It could be a year where we gain complete trust in our Savior alone.

[1 : 09] We don't know what 2012 will bring. We don't know what God has planned within this year. It would be futile and pointless to say we do.

To say we know who's going to win the World Series. To say we know what God's going to do. To say any of these things. But, we know God's Word.

We know what He's promised. We know what we are to do through the year. And that's kind of where I want to take us this morning. The typical version of New Year's resolutions are doomed to fail from the beginning.

And all of us have experienced some resolution where it didn't last a week, maybe a day, maybe a couple hours, whatever it is. I know what mine would be.

If I resolved to not eat sugar, it would last maybe 20 minutes. That's a magnetic hole for me, two sugar. But, they tend to not work.

[2 : 14] They're pretty much doomed to fail because they're all about ourselves. They're all rooted in what we want, what we think we need, our abilities.

And the problem is that we're going to fail. There's no ifs, ands, or buts about it. We are going to fail. We are fallible. And the outcome is going to be we're going to fall short.

Now, of course, there's some resolutions and some people who are strong-willed and can just fight through that. And, you know, as we say a lot, illustrations fall short somewhere. So, I understand that.

However, most of the things aren't going to work. Besides being rooted in ourselves, there are also surface level. For example, I want to lose weight so that I look better.

It's very surface level. There's no meat to that. I want to read more so that I know more. Again, that's a good thing, but it's just surface level.

[3 : 17] I want to talk to people so that I can then become more popular. Again, very surface level. Now, of course, not all our motives are surface level.

But what if our New Year's resolutions, what if we made resolutions that were centered on our relationship with Jesus? Were Christ-centered, Christ-focused resolutions?

What if we made resolutions that were founded in eternal truth? If we did that, then the outcome could be health.

Our outcome could be spiritual health and physical health. Our outcome could be knowledge. Knowledge of who God is and our Savior. Our outcome could be people.

We could become popular or hated, but we'd have people in our lives. We would gain a kingdom view and we would share the gospel with people. Of course, I want to be clear.

[4 : 21] I'm not dismissing resolutions, New Year's resolutions or self-examination, because those things can be healthy. But the way we've been taught to do them are usually rooted in what we

want, what we desire, and they're doomed to fail.

Jonathan Edwards, seven pages printed out of his resolutions. They're ridiculous. I was going to read a couple of them, and I just was under conviction not to do that, because they're pretty convicting.

But he made resolutions. He made things that he was going to try to do. So there's nothing wrong with that. So with all that said, I've come up with three resolutions or encouragements for us for this year, 2012.

Three things that I think can help us as we move forward as a church, but also individually, mainly individually, as followers of Christ. Resolution number one.

Be the person God has made you into. Be the person that God has made you into. Turn to Romans chapter 6. And resolution number one, I kind of cheated, because if you've been around, you know that I just got finished preaching through Romans chapter 6.

[5 : 36] So it's fresh on my mind. Don't hate me. All right. Romans chapter 6. Now we're going to read two verses.

When I say be the person God has made you into, I'm not saying this mystical, spiritual pep talk thing. Go and be that person that you can be.

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the person that God has made you as a Christian, who you are before God. So resolution number one, be the person God has made you into.

Romans chapter 6. We're going to read verse 6 and 7. It says, We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

For one who has died has been set free from sin. Let me read verse 8. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we also live with Him.

[6 : 42] The beginning of verse 6. We know that our old self, if we've got an old self, then we surely have a new self.

If we're putting off or if our old self has died, then we're left with something new. In 2 Corinthians 5, 16 and 17. You guys know 17, I'm sure.

But verse 16 says, From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Or Romans 6, old self.

But we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come.

So we are a new creation. As Christians, because of the blood of Christ, because of His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, we are no longer in bondage to sin.

[7 : 48] So we're a new creation where sin, verse 6, is brought to nothing. Sin has no value, no worth, no ability over us. Sin no longer has control over us.

And I know we've gone over this several times going through Romans chapter 6, but we constantly have to be reminded over and over and over that sin has no power over us.

Christ has defeated sin. His resurrection has ended the reign of sin in your life if you are a Christian. A new creation. A new creation also where we're no longer enslaved to sin.

We're no longer enslaved to sin. We're set free from sin. Sin no longer has control or power over you. And one of the things I struggled with when we preached in Romans chapter 6 was, how can I come up with an illustration that communicates this clearly?

How can I let you know that we're set free from sin? We're no longer in bondage to sin. And I still can't do it. The truth is, though, that we are free.

[8 : 59] That we are free from the burden of sin and the power of sin in our lives. So we can no longer say, and we should no longer say, well, that's just who I am.

I just struggle with that sin, right? That's just, you know, those are the cards I've been dealt and I just, you know, struggle with it. Onward I go. We can no longer say, I just can't do anymore.

I've done everything I can. You are free from sin because of Jesus. And this is who you are. This is where you stand. Stop wallowing in your sin.

Stop thinking that you can't do anymore. That this is just who you are because that's not the case. You and I, if you are a Christian, I'm a Christian. We are set free from sin. It no longer has control.

Romans 6.11 says, So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin. So our old self, dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[10 : 05] Be dead to sin and alive to God. This is who we are. This is a good resolution to be the person God has made you into.

We are at war. War. The language following in verses 12-15 tell us, use war language. We are at war.

And I'm afraid, I'm afraid that a lot of us are laying down in the front lines. We are laying down without our swords, without our guns. We are being trampled.

We are being taken captive. We are being tortured. And all the while, not fighting. Is there a fight in you? Are you fighting against sin? Is there a fight in you to not give in to the sin that is stronger than you think?

I'm afraid that there's no fight in a lot of us. I'm afraid that there's no fight in you and sometimes in me.

[11 : 14] The question is, though, how can there be no fight? If we're reading what we're reading, we have been set free from sin. We are no longer a soldier of sin being used by sin, being abused by sin.

We are soldiers of God to serve God alone. Being set free from sin. We must fight. We must fight against lust.

Fight against pride. Fight against gossip. Fight against discontentment. Make war against these things.

Against sin. Because if we don't, we're going to be conquered. If we don't, we're not going to have a life of joy and a life that is God-honoring.

Stop laying down and saying, that's just who I am. Those are my struggles. You have been set free in order to fight.

[12 : 20] And in fighting, bring glory to God. This is who we are. Be the person God has made you into. No longer a slave to sin, but a slave to righteousness.

This is who you are. Resolution number two. Be about the Lord's work. Be about the Lord's work. Turn to 1 Corinthians 15.

I like to say a lot of obvious statements. And of course, this is an obvious statement. Be about the Lord's work. Well, you're a Christian, so do God's work. Of course. Yes, I agree. So out of who we are then, we have been set free.

We have been, the chains of sin is broken. Sin no longer has control over us. We are now slaves to righteousness, which is a good thing, not a bad thing. We are now servants of the Lord.

So out of that, then, we do the Lord's work. We are about the Lord's work. 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

[13 : 25] One of my favorite chapters in all of Scripture. Paul starts off the chapter and he makes the case for the resurrection of Christ. And he says things like, verse 3, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with Scriptures.

If that's not enough, and that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the twelve, and then appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, more of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, Paul says, He also appeared to me, and why I am the most unworthy to be appeared to. He makes this case about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He proves it here just by the witness of these men that he has listed. Well, then he goes on to say that if Jesus was not resurrected, then we are most to be pitied because we should just go on and live life.

In fact, he uses, in verse 32, What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I thought would be said, Ephesus, if the dead are not raised, let us eat, drink, for tomorrow we die.

[14 : 41] Let us just forget about this Christian life and go on. If Jesus was not resurrected, if the dead was not resurrected. So then we come, and he talks about it later on in the chapter, verse 42.

So is it with the resurrection of the dead, what is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable? Verse 43. It is sown in dishonor, and it is raised in glory.

It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown in natural body, it is raised in spiritual body. For there is natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Jesus is better.

He's making the case that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is important. So we come now, and we get to the end, where because of Jesus, we have, the end of the chapter, because of Jesus, we

have victory over sin, victory over death.

What we believe is true, because Jesus was resurrected. And then where our English language kind of falls short a little bit. Verse 56 says, The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. [15:51] Then verse 57. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. So he closes this up by saying, in our English language, But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I'm pretty certain that there's a little more intensity to that statement. He closes it by saying, But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 58. Therefore, my beloved brothers, brothers and sisters, Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

So resolution number two is be about the Lord's work. The first here in verse 58, It's the main verse I want to look at. It says, Be steadfast.

Another meaning for that is to sit, or to stay. Another one is to soak. To be steadfast. To not move.

Now, some people would say that Spurgeon is as anointed as some of these other writers.

[17:05] He's not. Some people quote him as often to think that he's part of Scripture, but he's not. But he's got a good thing here, talking about Scripture and preaching.

And I want to kind of read it to you, because what he says, he kind of gives light to some of these words, some of these verbs. He says, One thing more, and it is this.

Let us, dear brethren, try to get saturated with the Gospel, to soak in the Gospel. I always find that I can preach best when I can manage to lie a soak in my text.

I like to get a text and find out its meaning and bearings and so on. And then, after I have bathed in it, I delight to lie down in it and let it soak into me.

It softens me, or hardens me, or does whatever it ought to do to me. And then, I can talk about it.

You need not be very particular about the words and phrases if the spirit of the text has filled you.

[18:07] Thoughts will leap out and find raiment for themselves. Become saturated with spices, and you will smell of them. A sweet perfume will distill from you and spread itself in every direction.

We call it unction. Do you not love to listen to a brother who abides in fellowship with the Lord Jesus? Even a few minutes of such a man is refreshing. For like his master, his paths drop fatness. Dwell in the truth, and let the truth dwell in you. Be baptized into its spirit and influence that you may impart thereof to others. If you do not believe the gospel, do not preach it, for you lack an essential qualification.

But even if you do believe it, do not preach it until you have taken it up into yourself as the wick takes up the oil. So only can you be a burning and shining light.

Soak in the Word of God. Now, he's speaking to students. This is out of his lectures to my students. He's teaching the guys who are going to be preachers. But you and me, and all of us in this room, can take the truth that he says, soak in his Word.

[19:16] Soak in the Word of God. To sit in the Word of God. To know the Word of God. To stand in the Word of God. To stay in the Word of God. In 1989, I can remember, and almost be horrified by the pictures, of the protests in Tiananmen Square.

There was, if you go to YouTube, there's a lot of videos of this, and I don't know why you would watch it, but there's, one of the famous scenes is, is the young Chinese man who stands in front of a tank, and he will not move.

And protesters laying in street, in the street in front of tanks, they will not move, because they believe, they stay in what they are, in what they believe in. They're sitting in what they believe in. Likewise for us, we must sit and stay in the Word of God. Know the Word of God. Soak in the Word of God. Be willing to die for the Word of God and the truth of God's teaching.

We must be steadfast in our faith, in who Jesus is, and who we are because of Jesus. We have been set free.

[20:29] We cannot waver, cannot waver in the Gospel. The protester did not waver. We must not waver for the truth that is greater than what he was fighting for.

The next word it says is, immovable. Immovable. Like the protester who was immovable, did not move. Firmly persistent. When we fight, we never give up.

We never give ground. We stay the course. We don't give up ground. We don't give up an inch. We can be undefeatable if we fight.

We can be undefeatable if we fight with Christ, if we stand with Him. But we so often just lay down and say, this is who I am. These are the cards I've been dealt.

This is my situation, and this is my struggle, and this is, some of us use, this is my thorn. This is the thorn in my side that I'm going to struggle with. No, you can have victory over that sin.

[21 : 38] You can have victory over that struggle that you think has got you. We can be, we have to be immovable. Be about the Lord's work.

We have to be immovable against false teaching. Be immovable about it. Not give an inch. Not say, oh, well, you know, maybe. No, immovable. Immmovable against sin.

Immmovable against mediocrity in your life as a child of God. Positive. Be immovable in kingdom work. Immmovable about the gospel and sharing the gospel.

Immmovable about loving others no matter what they look like or who they are. We must be immovable. And then finally, in this verse, it says, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Our lives should overflow in the work of the Lord. It's not a, it's not, you know, you fill your glass up and you get to the top and you stop.

[22 : 48] Because if we have that mentality, then we work and we serve the Lord until we've done enough and then we're done. Until that cup is full, we're finished. No, abounding here is an overflow.

You keep pouring into that cup and it keeps overflowing and overflowing and overflowing.

Abounding in the work of the Lord. Acquaintances in your life should know that you're a Christian.

Friends should know where you stand in issues. See, if what is written here by Paul is true and if the scriptures are true, then there is no other response, no other appropriate response in our lives than to do the work of the Lord.

We do the work of the Lord because of the work that He's already done for us. He's already done in our lives. So, resolution number one was be the man God has made you or made you into.

Resolution number two, be about the Lord's work. And then resolution number three, be the person you say you are. Be the person you say you are.

[24 : 06] Now, this came to me this week. Conviction of the Holy Spirit and words from my wife.

Husbands, you probably think they're both the same. Sometimes I do too, but they're not.

Wives and Holy Spirits are a little different. I, yeah, does my life away from teaching and preaching, does my life away from being in front of people line up with what I'm saying?

Am I the same person? Is there consistency? You know, this, this last couple weeks has been, has been tough for, for me personally and I allowed my circumstances to affect my emotions and, and how I acted.

For you, does your life, does what you communicate here on Sunday morning, or what you communicate to your family, or what you communicate to friends about being a Christian, does it line up with how you act every other moment of your day, every other moment of your week?

Are you consistent? Does your life line up? Or do you allow circumstances to affect you? Be the person you say you are.

[25 : 35] In chapter 15, in 1 Corinthians, where we are, the church at Corinth was having, was having an identity crisis. They were, they were messing everything up.

Like every truth that, that Paul had taught them, they had completely messed it up. They were, they were a messed up bunch. Messed up enough that Paul had to write two letters to them.

They didn't get it the first time. And when, what they had done was they, they had twisted truths, they had forgotten the gospel that, that, that God and that Paul had taught them.

And so at the beginning of, of chapter 15, after, of course, Paul wasn't writing in chapters, but he says in verse 1, Now, I would remind you brothers, of the gospel I preach to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preach to you, unless you believe in vain.

And he goes on to, as I read earlier, to communicate the gospel that, that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, that he was resurrected, all as the scriptures had said.

[26 : 58] So, in verse 1 and 2, this is who you are in Christ. You have received the gospel in which you stand. Because of Christ, you are able to stand in this truth.

Now, stop being distracted from that truth and forgetting the gospel. He has to remind them the gospel. For us, you know, it's one thing to have moments of disbelief or moments of inconsistency and, and of course, we repent and ask forgiveness and we, and we, um, try not to do it again.

But it's a whole other thing to have a life of that unbelief and that inconsistency. It's another thing to, to have a life that is mastered by sin.

We have moments, but we cannot have a life mastered by sin and I would question the salvation of anyone who has mastered by sin because you have been set free from sin.

You have been justified. You have been made right before God because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You cannot.

[28 : 23] So, for you and for me, are you being the person you say you are? Does your life line up with what you're teaching? Does your life line up with what you're saying, what you're communicating?

Does your life line up? Does how you spend your money line up with the conviction that you say you have? does it all line up with scripture? And that's the trunk card.

Be the person you say you are and ultimately be the person that scripture tells you to be. So, resolutions then. Be, or act as the person that God has made you into.

Be about the Lord's work and be the person you say you are. if we do these three, if we can do these three, then all the other things that we can think of as resolutions become secondary to these. And by God's grace, those secondary things might get done as well. We do things to the glory and honor of God. We may eat differently.

[29 : 39] We may act differently. We may speak differently. We may yearn and long to know God more and gain that knowledge.

By God's grace, we'll share the gospel and we'll learn about people and get to know people. We can do these three and everything else is secondary.

our lives bring God glory when we love Jesus, when we worship Jesus, and when we honor Jesus.

And I believe that these three resolutions lead us to do just that.

Honor Jesus, love Jesus, worship Jesus. and of course, all of this is done because of Jesus. We cannot do any of this apart from Christ.

So as we live together, as we gather together on Sundays and on Wednesdays and on Thursday nights and on any other night we get together, let us resolve to be the person God has made us into, to be about the Lord's work, and to be the person that we say we are, to be consistent, to not be hypocrites, to be lovers of Jesus with our word and deed.