

A RESOLUTION FOR LIFE

Psalm 27

Intro: I don't know how the practice of New Year's resolutions got started, but it predates my time on earth. As long as I have lived I have heard people speak about making New Year's resolutions. Probably such a practice arose because most people, if they are honest with themselves, admit that they could be better, and that they could do better. You find this attitude among non-Christians like you do among Christians. At the same time most of us have to admit that most of our resolutions have not been kept, and often we come back year after year to try to deal with the same problems that we have tried to settle before.

What is a resolution anyway? Well, when we use the word with reference to a new year's resolution, it is a determination that we make concerning some part of our lives which needs to be changed for the better. We as Christians know that "better" has to mean *more like the Lord wants us to be*, and that means *more like the Lord Himself*. That is not at all what a non-Christian wants to be or do. And we as Christians know, or should know, that such an objective is far beyond us if it is something that we are trying to do in our own strength. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Christian growth and Christian living are only possible by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

But there is another thing that we as Christians need to keep in mind when we seek greater sanctification (because that is what we are talking about). It is that we have to work at what we are seeking to achieve. That is why we encourage you to read your Bible every day. But we not only need to read the Word; we need to understand it, and that requires prayer and meditation. We need to believe the Bible, and we need to obey the Bible. We learn from the Bible itself that these are things that the Lord wants us to be concerned about, not just at the first of every year, but every day in the year. And He is always ready to help us, but He wants us to recognize that we need His help, and that we are continually seeking His help by prayer. Paul in writing to the church at Philippi made a very significant statement along this line, a statement that we would do well to memorize so that we can always be reminded of it. I am referring to Philippians 2:12-13 where we read:

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

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13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

As I have indicated, the changes that we as Christians want to make in our lives, are the changes that God wants us to make, changes that will make each one of us more like the Lord Jesus. That is why the Lord has saved us, to make us like Jesus Christ. Obviously we can't do that by ourselves any more than we could have been our own savior. We definitely have responsibilities, but using the means that the Lord has given us such as Bible reading, prayer, obedience to the Word, and church attendance, yet it is God Who does the work. If we understand this, with the Bible as our guide, then the resolution that we make to be more pleasing to the Lord, can really mean something. It can make every day a blessing. We still are going to fail, but our failures will teach us how much more we need to be trusting the Lord to be what He wants us to be, and to live the way He wants us to live.

So resolutions are not just for the beginning of each year; they are for the beginning of each day. We have an illustration in the book of Philippians of a resolution that the Apostle Paul lived by. You will find it in Philippians 3:14 where he wrote:

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

This describes Paul as a runner in the race of life. He had not yet reached the goal, but he was pressing on, day after day, to reach that goal of being like the Lord Jesus. Everything in his life was directed toward that one objective. And this explains why the Apostle Paul was the man that he was. The power in Paul's life was Christ. In fact, Christ was his life. We are all in the race of life, not running in competition with each other, but each one of us needs to be running, putting for all the strength that we have in Christ, to reach the goal.

The Apostle Paul was the kind of example that we all would do well to follow.

But this morning I want to take you to an OT passage while we consider together another of God's choice people whom we would do well to follow. The passage is Psalm 27; the writer was David who was the King over the whole nation of Israel. I don't have the time for an exposition of the whole Psalm, but I want to take some thoughts from it to help us all as we stand on the threshold of a new year. But first let me ask you a question.

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Here is the question: As you have read your Bible, and you have come to a passage in which the writer has expressed how much the Lord means to him, or to her, as the case may be, have you said to yourself, "I wish I could say what this writer said about the Lord and my relationship to Him"?

We all should know that the Bible is the Word of God, and that the Spirit of God enabled each writer of Scripture to write so that the words that the writer used were the words that the Holy Spirit directed him to use. It is very important to know this about the Bible. As Peter said in 2 Peter 1, "Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). And yet at the same time we know that the Holy Spirit used the understanding of the writers, their own experiences, their own gifts, and their own convictions as they wrote their part in the Scriptures.

I feel that way about Psalm 27. It obviously and truly expresses the way that David felt about the Lord. Every child of God should want to be able to write what David wrote. Now I know that it has a special OT setting to it because he spoke of "the house of the Lord," and "His temple," and "His pavilion," and "His tabernacle," but otherwise this is a psalm which any of us could have written if the Holy Spirit would guide us as He guided David. But the Bible is finished now, and so no one today is writing by divine revelation.

Now you find as you read through the Psalm that David had a lot of enemies, many men who would gladly have killed him. And there were times in David's life when it looked like they might kill him. But it was probably the troubles which David faced in his life which caused him to draw so closely to the Lord, seeking the Lord's protection, and at the same time learning to trust the Lord, and to love the Lord, as few of the Lord's people do. Look again at verse 2, and then verse 3, and then verses 5 and 6, and finally verse 12.

But in contrast with those verses notice his prayer in verse 7, then verses 9 through to the end of the psalm. Talk about a biographical psalm, David wrote many of them, but this Psalm has David written all over it.

But David did not write just to tell us about his troubles; he wrote to tell us what he had learned about the Lord in his troubles, which shows that the Lord was involved in all of his troubles. It was through those troubles that he had learned about the greatness and sufficiency of the Lord. It was

in those troubles that he had learned to pray. It was in those troubles that he had learned about the goodness of the Lord. It was in his troubles that he learned that it doesn't make any difference how many enemies you have, nor how strong they are, as someone has said, if the Lord is on your side, it doesn't make any difference who your enemies are.

But look at David's prayer beginning with verse 7:

- 1) Hear me.
- 2) Have mercy upon me.
- 3) Answer me.

And then in verse 9:

- 4) Hide not thy face from me.
- 5) Put not thy servant away in anger.
- 6) Leave me not, neither forsake me.

In verse 10 we read that those who love us the most are not able to help us.

In verse 11:

- 7) Teach me Thy way.
- 8) Lead me in a plain path.

On to verse 12:

- 9) Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies.

In verse 13 the words "I had fainted" are added by the translators to bring out the meaning of what David was saying. He would have been in complete despair, total hopelessness, if he had not be sure that he would see the goodness of the Lord, not in heaven (it will be very apparent there), but right here on earth in the land of the living.

David really learned to pray when he knew that no one but the Lord could meet his needs.

But now I have purposely skipped over three verses: 4, 8, and 14.

Just as the Apostle Paul said, "This one thing I do," so King David said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord."

At this point we need to put our Bibles down and ask ourselves the question, "If the Lord were to ask you, or me, what one thing we would like for Him to do for us, what would it be?" There would probably be a lot of answers in a congregation like this. Even David probably had many secondary needs that he could have brought to the Lord. The word

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“desired” is translated in the KJV with many different words all the way from “demand” to “wish.” What did David want? He didn’t want any of the gifts that the Lord could have given him; *He wanted the Lord Himself.*

We are all guilty, aren’t we? We seek the Lord’s blessing, but we don’t really seek the Lord Himself. You see, the Lord purposely puts us in difficult circumstances so that we will seek His help, but that primarily because He wants us to seek Him. He wants us to desire to be with Him.

Now we know that David had, like I have said about President Bush, “more responsibilities than should be laid upon one man.” After all, David was the King. He couldn’t have spent all day every day in the temple. And that is not what David meant by what he said. But he expressed his desire the way he did because he wanted to be conscious every day and all the days that the Lord his God was always with Him.

But with as great a place as David had in the nation Israel, how did he know that the Lord would have that much time for Him? Look at verse 8. The Lord told David to seek His face because He wanted David to be with Him and to stay with Him. And the Lord feels that way about all of His children. Hasn’t He promised that He would never leave us nor forsake us?

Let’s test ourselves. Have you acknowledged the Lord’s presence with you since you got up this morning.? He has been watching over you and me all night long, waiting for us to wake up, so that He can hear our voices and enjoy fellowship with us. His word to King David, and His word to all of us is, “Seek ye my face.” David’s response was, and our response should be every day and all day, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek.”

Now we don’t have a temple to go to. We can’t go any place but what the Lord is there. And, as David responded from his heart, that is the way we need to respond.

But what is “the beauty of the Lord”? Let us ask Isaiah that question. In Isaiah 6 when he tells us about that occasion when he saw the Lord. And he heard the seraphim as they cried to one another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa. 6:3). The beauty of the Lord is his holiness; the ugliness of man is his sin.

Now we are not looking for a special vision of the Lord. The place where

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we see the Lord is in His Word. But we need to be looking for Him in the Word, and then worshiping Him as we see Him.

So we seek the Lord because He has commanded us to seek Him, to seek Him daily, to seek Him constantly. But what is the one thing in all of this chapter that David has told us to do? **See verse 14.**

In all of the trials of life (and there are many of them), we need our hearts to be strengthened. And that is just exactly what the Lord does as we wait on Him, and wait for Him.

Concl: O, that the Lord would so work in our hearts that we might profit from our trials as David did from His, so that He came not just seeking the blessing of the Lord, but that He came, first of all, seeking the Lord. This was the great passion of David's life. This was not just his new year's resolution; it was his resolution for life. Let us, by God's grace, make it ours for life as well. The Lord's call to David is His call to us.