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BISHOP'S DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT



RESOLUTE OR RESOLUTIONS?

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the Word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the Word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:18-23)

It is that time of year again when people begin to think about their goals and aspirations for the upcoming year. A new year is a time of new beginnings and with it comes the so-called “New Year’s Resolutions.” For some their goal will be to lose weight. For others, getting out of debt is first and foremost on their minds. Still others set out on January 1st with the plan to read the Bible through in a year

or to be involved more with their kids or to finally finish that home improvement project that has been in the works for years but was never started or finished. I would venture to submit most do not enter the new year without at least thinking, however minimally, about what they plan, wish, or hope to do.

In our devotional text, Jesus offers the Parable of the Sower, where He teaches His disciples the various criteria that determine how followers hear, process, and apply the Word of God in their lives. The parable offers a deeper insight to those of us who are transfixed by the cares of this world and the riches thereof. Those of us who are so overwhelmed with our desire for achievement, we cannot share the Word of God with others or follow His direction.

When we are making our resolutions and judging our life, instead

of trying to figure out which aspirations we have not achieved, try to decipher where we believe we stand with God. Not a specific standing on a particular fault, but an overall standing. Let us ask for forgiveness based on the things we know that we have done; and even forgiveness for the deeds we have forgotten.

Perhaps you are aware of the trend to choose a word for the new year. Some say there is a word we must remove from our vocabulary. What is that word? It is "should." Rather than saying, "I should do this or that," we must replace it with "I will..." As we begin a new year, often we make resolutions.

We are commanded to hide God's Word on our hearts and to impress all of Scripture upon our children...



Sadly, those resolutions may be forgotten as quickly as they are made. Our problem is we are not resolute. We lack the unwavering determination to see our resolutions fulfilled. Resolute suggests having or showing a fixed, firm purpose; determined, resolved; unwavering; faithful. Thus, a resolution should be more than a wishy-washy wish list of hope to do achievements.

The Scriptures are filled with resolutions that God has made to His children. God does not use the word "should" when He makes His promises. How could we trust God if His promises were prefaced with "I should?" When God makes a promise and says, "I will," He does. He resolves to keep His covenant of love and all that such a covenant encompasses – protection, salvation, forgiveness, faithfulness, rest, guidance and peace.

- God said to Noah, "I will confirm my covenant with you." (Genesis 6:17-18)

- To Abraham He said, "I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you." (Genesis 17:7)

- He made this promise to Jacob, "I will protect you wherever you go. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you." (Genesis 28:15)

- To Moses He promised, "I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment." (Exodus 6:6)

- And to Solomon, God said, "Because your greatest desire is to help your people... I will certainly give you the wisdom and knowledge you requested. But I will also give you wealth, riches, and fame such as no other king has had before you or will ever have in the future!" (2 Chronicles 1:11-13)

- These are some of the "I will" promises He gives to us:

- The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you." (Psalm 32:8)

- The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. When they call

on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honor them. I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation." (Psalm 91:14-16)

- "Come now, let's settle this," says the Lord. "Though your sins are red like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

- "I will be your God throughout your lifetime – until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you." (Isaiah 46:4)

- Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Perhaps we made some resolutions for this past year that have gone unfulfilled. Rather than saying, "I should," shift your focus from

what you can do to what God can do. With God's help say, "I will!" God's fixed, firm purpose is to fill our lives with His fullness. I praise God for He is resolute.

Setting goals is quite biblical. In fact, we see the comparison made between the ant and the sluggard quite often in the book of Proverbs. The ant works diligently towards the yearly goal of preparing while the sluggard sits around in a state of laziness, typically accomplishing nothing and setting no goals whatsoever.

While one would arguably be hard pressed to find a Scripture that demands a membership to the local gym, we are told that the approach to life of gluttony is an abomination to God. There is no command to read through the Bible in a year; however, we are commanded to hide God's Word on our hearts and to impress all of Scripture upon our children when we lie down and rise up and when we go in and come out from our homes. One cannot do that unless they are spending quality, consistent, and yes resolute time reading the Bible. In order to do so, it must become a goal, something we strive to do with an unwavering sense of purpose.

Everyone desires change, which is why we all make resolutions. When the struggle to keep the resolution becomes a challenge, one needs to remember why one made the promise in the first place. The reason is that one wants to see oneself in a different place at the end of the year and even beyond than one was at the beginning.

Some reports tell us that "new year's resolutions" are becoming a "thing of the past." However, it is good to take some time to reflect... what is it that you really want your life to accomplish? Take a few minutes to think about this. The Word of God tells us that a people without a vision will perish. That lets us know that "looking ahead" and making a resolution – or setting a goal is a good thing.

While we may have some earthly, physical goals – such as, eat

healthier, spend more time with our families, save more money – the most important thing we can "resolve" to do, is to be "resolute" in following hard after Christ. Unwavering in our decision to follow; determined to seek Him every day for direction; purposed to allow Him to be Lord of all of us – our lives, our homes, our hearts.

God did not create us to live aimless lives. He gave each of us gifts and abilities to use to bring Him glory. If we feel like we are living aimlessly then maybe now is a good time to reassess where our life is heading. We can glorify God through our work, our family, our churches, our hobbies and our friends. But if we are just filling our own needs through these areas then our life will be aimless. God did not create us so that we could have whatever we need. We were created to bring God glory. And when we do that, in whatever way God has gifted us, that is when we will really feel that we are running with purpose.

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He has a vision for each of us that is absolutely amazing. Each of us, individually, was designed with a purpose. When Christ lives in our hearts – and shines through us, His purpose for us is carried out.

Do not fall into the trap of making resolutions just to make resolutions. Put some thought behind your goals, implement a plan of action, and go forth and do all things for the glory of God. **"BE RESOLUTE IN YOUR GOD GIVEN RESOLUTIONS."** SHALOM!