

**1 Corinthians 1: 1-8; “Resolved to Be Holy”, A Sermon for the New Year,  
Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
in the Morning Worship Service.**

As we approach the entrance to another year, what should be our resolution? I think that it should be that we would resolve by the grace of God to be more holy. Nothing shows forth more about a relationship with Jesus Christ than this; that you and I would be pursuing holiness. “Be ye holy, for I am holy,” Peter writes in 1 Peter 1: 16. “Pursue peace with all men, and the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord,” it says in Hebrews 12: 14. This is what the resolution of a Christian should be. “How shall I become more holy?” you ask me. “What can I do; what should my resolutions for this coming year be?” Well, it is good to remember that some people resolve and never do; they promise God and they never change. This cannot be glorifying to Him. A resolution before God is a promise that we intend by the grace of God to do something differently. It can be, for the Christian, a vow before God. It is fine to make resolutions if we will really work toward the goal. You recall the words of the preacher in the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 5. “Keep your foot when you go to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.” “Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is heaven, and you are upon the earth: therefore let your words be few.” “For a dream comes through the multitude of words.” We might add, through a multitude of resolutions. “When you vow a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools: pay that which you have vowed.” “Better is it that you should not vow, than that you should vow and not pay.”

We could say the same with regard to resolutions. It may seem very holy to want to be like Jonathan Edwards, and to make many resolutions as he did. But remember, they were his resolutions, and I believe that he really did attempt to keep them. He made 70 of them when he was 20 years old and they are a very good indication of his godly desires and his progress in holiness. But you and I are not Jonathan Edwards, and so we must study to know ourselves in regard to what we resolve to do. Remember what it goes on to say in Ecclesiastes 5: 6, “Suffer not your mouth to cause your flesh to sin; neither say before the angel,(the messenger of God) that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at your voice(or your excuse), and destroy the work of your hands?” “For in a multitude of dreams and many words there are also many vanities: but you fear God.” Ah, this is very wise. I believe that as we look at 1 Corinthians 1: 1-8, that we can take the words of Paul, and we can make resolutions for ourselves out of them. I will attempt to use some of the resolutions of Jonathan Edwards in conjunction with the resolutions that we will draw out for our own use, from this text. 1<sup>st</sup> – Let us resolve to abide in Biblical teaching in order to walk in it. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Let us resolve to strive to understand more about what it means to be sanctified in Christ. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – Let us resolve to maintain the unity of the faith with those who call upon the name of the Lord. May the Lord help us to consider these resolutions seriously.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Let us resolve to abide in Biblical teaching in order to walk in it.** (Verse 1)

You see the truth of the Christian life is found here. Paul did not appoint himself an Apostle, a teacher, or a preacher. God did. It was His holy will that it be so. The Apostles’ doctrine was something that the Church of God continued steadfastly in, it says in Acts 2: 43. They continued steadfastly in it because this Apostolic teaching and doctrine, which is now for us codified and complete in the Bible, is God’s way of defining what we are to be doing, and how we are to be thinking and living out the Christian life. You and I as believers are to abide in the Apostles’ doctrine. If we do not, we will be weak and sickly Christians. This is why preaching is so important, and not just pep talks to stir us up. As I encounter many people who claim that they

are Christians, I sometimes wonder if they have really understood the Christian life. Many Christians think that they have the liberty to live the Christian life as they might want to live it; that is, in a very worldly sense. They do not seem to have the love of truth and the love of spiritual things in their life. They do not regard God's Word as a law for their life. They are not under law, they say, they are under grace. They think that that oft-quoted verse from Romans 6: 14 is the basis for their not really having to pay any attention to the Bible or what God would have them to do. They forget that Romans 6: 17 says, "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." "And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." They do not read their Bible much and they do not spend much time in holy contemplation or prayer. They do not speak of spiritual truth in an experiential way, as though they were thinking and meditating upon it day and night, as is mentioned in Psalm 1. I hope that you will see, there is a great deal of difference between a Christian who thinks and acts from self-will, and a Christian who thinks and acts from God's will. The Apostle Paul was an apostle by the will of God, not by his own will.

Similarly, you and I are not Christians by our own will but by the will of God. We have been called by God to live a life of obedience to His Word. Jesus says, "If you abide in My Word you are truly disciples of mine." (John 8: 31) The Christian life is not just going to a church once a week. The Christian life is living your life to the glory of God. It is your so enjoying your relationship with God that you become a willing participant in the church. It is also living your life consistent with the word of God, and the will of God, in your home, and out in public as well, by the grace of God and according to the truth of God. Therefore, we are to live the Christian life in the way that it is described for us in 2 Corinthians 5: 14 and 15. "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus; that if One died for all, then all died.; and He died for all, that those who live should no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." We are here given to understand that Christ died so that we would die. This statement means that when we are called to know God through Jesus Christ that we die to sin and to the love of the world. We are dead to sin and crucified to the world. The way that you know that this is so in your life is if you do not love sin and the world in the way that a worldling does. Truly, you do love and appreciate all of God's good gifts. But you find that your greatest satisfaction lies in your thinking about your relationship to God, and how you can please Him. When you die to sin, you begin to live more and more to righteousness, and the spiritual life and relationship with Jesus Christ, and you are often thinking of the truth of His Word to see how you can put it into practice in your life. If you are not doing this you need to check yourself out to see if you are backslidden or whether you know the Lord at all.

This is why spiritual resolution is needed at this time. For 2 Corinthians 5: 17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." Just like this old year will pass away in just a few days, so your Old life of what you once were before you knew Christ is passed away, and now new things are coming. Think for a moment with me about a young lady who is getting married. Let's say that she is getting married tonight. When she gets married tonight, her whole life will change. She is not only going to have a new name. She is going to have a whole new dimension, and direction, and meaning to her existence because of it. Her life will no longer be lived to herself. She will have her husband to consider. And this is only right.

It is the same in the Christian life. And it is even more so with the Christian. When you come to Jesus Christ, you are married to Him spiritually. You have this new relationship, this spiritual fellowship and intimacy with Him. You have the new name of Christian and not the old name of "graceless". You are caught up with Christ, and you want Him to be the first person in your life; your Chief Delight. But you should know, that even though this is so, and all things are becoming new, that there is every reason to stop and think; "How can I love Christ more in this

coming year?” “How can I obey Him more and show forth the fact that He is my Lord more?” This good understanding will come when you resolve that you and your household will serve the Lord, by holding fast to, and living out, Apostolic teaching. Jonathan Edwards says in two of his resolutions, numbers 28 and 30 – “Resolved, to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, as that I may find, and plainly perceive, myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.” And, “Resolved, to strive every week to be brought higher in religion, and to a higher exercise of grace, than I was the week before.” This can only be done by abiding in Apostolic teaching.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Let us resolve to strive to understand more about what it means to be sanctified in Christ.** (Verse 2a)

“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...” I suppose we could preach whole sermons on this subject, but this is not my purpose. Today I would just like you to pause and to consider with me, that if you have believed in Jesus Christ, there difference between what you are now, and what you are becoming. It says here that those who believe in Jesus “are sanctified”. They were “set apart” it says in the margin. They were separated from other sinners by God’s working. He was working according to His purpose in salvation and sanctification. We can say, that Holiness in general, is related to your becoming more of what you already are. God is described as being holy. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, God has done a work of regeneration in your heart so that you have experienced a work of Definitive Sanctification. He has begun a good work of grace in you. When you think about sanctification, you need to see it as the pursuit of Righteousness. Your pursuing righteousness, will be consider in every situation what is the right thing to do, and then go about to do it. To know what is the right thing to do, you must study the commandments of God; those commandments which are found in God’s holy law. You certainly may legitimately think of yourself as a righteous person because you have believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. But now to become what you are called, that is your being called to be righteous and holy, this will only come about when you begin to think of how you are speaking and acting, moment by moment, in the sight of God. Is what you are doing seen by Him as being right thing to do? For He is the One who has loved you and given you His Son?

Let us understand that it is out of holy thinking and holiness being a reality in your heart, that righteousness comes about. The Lord Jesus was holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners; and that was part of the righteousness that He accomplished on your behalf; that righteousness which is imputed to you by faith. This is why it says in 1 Corinthians 1: 30, “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. All of the holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ led to His living out righteous attitudes, actions, and deeds, and this was that which led to our receiving all of these benefits of our salvation. The imputation of His righteousness leads to our justification. The imputation of His holiness leads to our being seen by God as holy during the whole of our spiritual transformation when you are pursuing holiness. It is why we are described in verse two, as those who “are sanctified”, those who are called saints. But are you becoming more like what you are called? Are you becoming more holy, harmless, and undefiled? Are you becoming more separate from sinners in the sense that you really do not want to participate in the worldly activities which sinners in the world engage in; that is, those activities which leave God and the pursuit of righteousness out of what they are doing?

The purpose of God in your sanctification, dear Christian, began in eternity past. It began when God chose you in Christ. It says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2: 13, “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is what

you and I are called to. Those of us who have faith were called through the preaching of the gospel; we were sanctified (set apart at the time of our conversion, to holiness) and now we are being sanctified; we are becoming holy people, as a result of that call. Think with me this morning of the fact that you are called one of His saints. You are one of His holy ones. You have come to experience the glory of Christ's grace. You are the subject of His divine power, as Peter says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1: 3. "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." Sanctification, therefore, is the excellency of His favor, and wisdom, His power and love being shown to His Elect people; from the beginning of their lives, to all eternity future. He has planned and purposed and has brought that purpose to pass in them, so that they might indeed become holy and righteous people. If this is so; as Peter says in 2 Peter 3: 11, "What manner of persons ought we to be in holy conduct and godliness?"

This has certain implications for us as we go into the next year. We need to remember that true religion is a matter of your heart responding to Christ and His word, first of all. If you have heart religion, it will no doubt come out, in the way that you think and the way the you speak and the way that you act. Listen to what it says in Proverbs 4: 23. "Guard your heart with all diligence for from it flow the issues of life." "Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you." "Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you." "Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established." "Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil." This is the basis for true repentance and it is the basis of your sincere obedience; thinking this way in your heart, and pondering what you do, and then going about to do it. Verses 20-23 say, "My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings." "Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh."

This is sanctification and this is the life of holiness. It is keeping God's sayings and your godly parent's sayings, in the midst of your heart. Listen to Thomas Brooks. "This inherent, this qualitative holiness, lies in a holy use and exercise of those supernatural graces in a way of holy walking." "All holy habits must be brought forth into holy acts; gracious habits must be attended with gracious motions, gracious operations, and gracious behavior." "Outward works must be suitable to inward habits." "It is with spiritual habits as it is with natural habits; the more they are acted and exercised, the more they are increased and strengthened." "Holy habits are golden talents that must be employed and improved." "Gracious habits are the candles of the Lord set up in us: and God hath set up those candles of heaven not to idle by, not to sleep by, but to work by, and walk by." "Where there is holiness of disposition, there must be, nay there will be, holiness in the way that we live."(conversation) "A holy heart is always attended with a holy life."

Listen to Edward's resolutions again. Number 4 – "Resolved, never to do any manner of thing, whether in soul or body, less or more, but what tends to the glory of God, nor be, nor suffer it, if I can possibly avoid it." Number 5 – "Resolved, never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can." Number 7 – "Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life." Number 8 – "Resolved, to act, in all respects, both speaking and doing, as if nobody had been so vile as I, and as if I had committed the same sins, or had the same infirmities or failings, as others; and that I will let the knowledge of their failings promote nothing but shame in myself, and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God." You see how seriously Mr. Edwards took his obligations to God, and to His Savior. I hope that we will, this year, be about our Father's business in this same way.

**3rdly- let us resolve to maintain the unity of the faith with those who call upon the name of the Lord.** (Verse 2b and 3)

There was a problem at Corinth that Paul wanted to address right away with the saints there. It was in thinking too much of gifted men, men of knowledge and power. The problem was, that they were not being able to recognize other Christians who were just as gifted because theirs was the sin of partiality. They sometimes could not recognize those whom God had appointed as apostles or teachers, as being gifted, or as being spiritual. This sin of partiality in regard to whose teaching they would receive, or not receive, was even causing divisions in their own assembly. They were being stunted in their spiritual growth because of it. He calls their attitude “carnal” three times in chapter 3, verses 1-4. Here in verse 2 he shows them how to view other Christians rightly. He says that they are “called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Christian life, he is saying, is not lining up behind the teachers and preachers who are the most gifted or eminent, or impressive. Being a saint is having your focus on the Lord Jesus Christ as the impressive One, and learning to pray in relation to the ministry of God’s Word. It is learning to pray also for grace and peace to be given to all of God’s saints.

This is important in our church here at Tama. It is important that we learn to do this; to pray in relation to people in other churches and other denominations where the inerrancy of God’s holy Word is held to. Verse 10 says, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” “For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you.” “Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or I am of Christ.” “Is Christ divided?” “Was Paul crucified for you?” “Or were you baptized in the name of Christ?” You can see how much the focus of the church at Corinth was upon men, and not upon Christ. And in the last case, the focus was so exclusively upon Christ, that other believers in their own assembly were being neglected, ignored, and perhaps even despised and rejected.

This is truly a great problem in the Church of Jesus Christ in our day as well. Christ is not divided. Let us understand this; that there are true believers in many denominations of what is called Christianity. There are many true churches of God’s dear saints still; churches which are not Reformed Baptist by name or doctrinal persuasion. Let us not think that we must hold to the truth of what we believe in such a way that we only recognize the work of the Lord in our own movement of churches. Let us not lessen the importance and the significance of some believers in the church who do not seem to be as impressive or important to the continuance of the Biblical ministry. God would have all believers to pray and call upon His holy name. He would have us all to call upon the Name of Jesus Christ; He would have us all to pray for grace and peace to be given to them, as well as to the most eminent saint. If we do not see this, it is a very good indication of what is really lacking in our faith. We should resolve to correct it in the days to come.

This does not mean that we have to, in any way, let go of, or compromise, the precious truths which we have come to embrace, or the details of the outworking of those truths in the life of our church. It simply means that we have to learn to bring truth to, and live the truth before, other believing people in such a way that they see our love and concern for them. We are not to look down upon them, or to despise them, or to always be contending with other believers to force them to come to the conclusions that we have come to, regarding Biblical truth. The truth will be the most persuasive if, by the Spirit’s power, we hold to it in a way that does not destroy the unity of the faith that Christ died to establish. True Christians should not be isolationists. I mean, it is a sad thing when Christians think that there are such great problems in the Church at large, that they have to retreat into their own home and never join a local church at all. And

further, it is also very sad when Christians see the problems in their own church, and yet they are convinced that they cannot pray for one another; neither will they work for the peace of Zion. They do not understand how God's kingdom is advanced, or how people are saved or changed from their sinful ways. They will line up behind the teachers and preachers that are the most powerful and impressive and persuasive with their words, Biblically, and then they will condemn everyone else who does not follow with them, as though the truth in all things is only in themselves or their favorite teacher or small group that agree with them. This is not the way of Christ.

Rather, our attitude and our resolution ought to be like Paul's in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13: 7-10. "Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified." "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." "For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong." "And this also we pray, that you may be made complete." Let this be your resolution for this coming year, that you may seek the good of all God's people by praying for them and by promoting the unity of the faith. "Become complete." "Be of good comfort." "Be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." (2 Corinthians 13: 11) Listen to the resolutions of Jonathan Edwards, once again, in closing. Number 13 – "Resolved, to be endeavoring to find out fit objects of liberality and charity." (People that you can help and give to.) Number 14- "Resolved, never to do anything out of revenge." Number 15 – "Resolved, never to suffer the least motions of anger towards irrational beings." Number 16- "Resolved, never to speak evil of any one, so that it shall tend to his dishonor, more or less, upon no account to do so except for some real good." Number 17 – "Resolved, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die." Number 18 – "Resolved, to live so, at all times, as I think is best in my most devout frames, and when I have the clearest notions of the things of the gospel, and another world." And then, finally, Number 19 – "Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if I expected it would not be above an hour before I should hear the last trump." My brethren, let us resolve to live a holy life, by the grace of Jesus Christ. Let us live in such a way that we will have no regrets when we come to die. Let us live in such a way that others will know that we are serious followers of our Lord Jesus Christ.