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A New Year's Resolution for the Heart; Psalm 119:9-16

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Introduction - Why do we make New Year's resolutions? Why do we commit to change, set goals for the upcoming year, strive to turn over a new leaf? We determine to eat healthier, finish a project, get adequate rest, spend more time with family, cut out unhealthy habits, change harmful behavior, get out of debt, etc. etc. etc. Why do we do this? Mainly because we sense that something is wrong. Things are not as they should be or could be, and new year's resolutions are our attempt to correct all the things we perceive that are wrong in our lives.

Now, why do so many resolutions fail? The new year represents a fresh start. A new year symbolizes a chance to start again. It's the perfect timing and occasion to make drastic and subtle changes. So why do most resolutions fizzle out before the end of January? Because most resolutions are grounded in nothing more than the sheer will and determination of self to fix self. It's difficult for a broken self to fix self. You can't fight your flesh with your flesh.

Now, I'm not against new year resolutions. I'm all for new year resolutions. However, as believers, we are far better served if we pursued spiritual resolutions for 2020, things of eternal significance. But those don't come by simply making a list, setting a goal, or making a commitment. To become more Christlike in 2020 will only come by daily surrender and submission to Christ. A change in our lives requires a change in our hearts, and that's God's specialty. Seeking the glory of the Lord and loving the Lord with all our hearts is the secret to successful resolutions.

Now, we can't change our hearts, but God can. However, we can keep putting our hearts in places where God changes hearts! There are places where His grace flows freely and therefore hearts are molded and shaped and broken and transplanted and transformed. Chief among these is the Word. We can't change our hearts, but we can keep pouring the Word into our hearts and sitting our hearts under the Word. And as we keep placing our hearts under the Word, God transforms our hearts and our lives change. That's how you make and keep spiritual resolutions in 2020. That's how you lay aside that vice. That's how you pick up that virtue. That's how you pursue holiness and grow in Christ. That's

exactly what I see in our text. I see David recognizing that something is wrong. I see him making a heart resolution, and then I see him totally depending on God to change him. I see him placing his heart again and again under God's Word.

#### I. A Resolution from the Heart (vv9-11)

A) v9 - David recognizes his problem, and his problem is a universal problem for all men. So when he says "How can a young man keep his way pure?" we all can ask the very same question.

1. David's got a problem with keeping himself pure before God. In fact, it seems an impossible task. That's why he's asking the question.
2. Just as there is a holy trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit, there is an unholy trinity of the world, the flesh, and the devil. And those three conspire together that we might be corrupt and defiled in every aspect of our lives. Our affections and our actions, our words and our deeds, our motives and our intentions are continually tainted with selfishness, with pride, with sin. And yet purity before God, in fellowship with God, is what we long for in our souls. How, how can a young man possibly keep his way pure?
3. David knows there is only one path of purity in this life. In the mix of the world's tantalizing temptations and the Enemy's deceitful enticements and the sinful inclinations of the flesh stands the Word of God! If a man or woman or single or student or child does keep their way pure, it will be because the Word has directed their way.

B) v10 - This is his resolution - "With my whole heart I seek You!" David knows the Scriptures well. He knows Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." He knows it is chief among the commandments, the greatest commandment. And so he knows that if he's going to keep his way pure by walking the way of the Word, it begins in the heart, the deepest part of man.

1. Notice he immediately turns to God for help. "Let me not wander from your commandments!" He knows he needs to seek God with all of his heart, but he also knows he will never do that on his own. He needs grace, so he couples his resolution with prayer. He depends on God to enable him to keep his resolution.

C) v11 - v9 is the problem, v10 is the resolution, v11 is the plan of action. v11 brings everything together. David recognizes his need for purity before God, he knows God's means of grace for keeping oneself pure is His Word, he knows change begins in the heart, he knows He needs God's grace so he prays for help, and now he's going to fill his heart with God's means of grace!

1. If I want to keep my way pure, I've got to get my heart filled with God's Word, the only path of purity, and the only way I'm going to change will be a change of heart, and God uses His Word to change hearts.
2. v11 is then the answer to v9. How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to Your Word. - So, I'm going to store up Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You, that I may keep my way pure!
3. When David says, "I have stored up Your Word in my heart," he does not mean rote memorization only. You can set out to memorize the entire Bible and be able to quote it verse by verse and not make one single stride in the fight against the flesh. Memorizing Scripture is the first step, not the only step. The object is to get the Word into our lives not just our heads. That's why David says, "I have stored up Your Word in my heart."
4. And so you see what David is doing. He placing his life, his soul, his heart in and under God's Word.
5. So how do we do that? How do we store God's Word in our hearts?
  - a. Read the Bible.
  - b. Memorize a portion of Scripture that God really impresses upon you.
  - c. Then you meditate on that passage. You study it. You read about it. You ask questions about it. You glean as much from that passage as you can.
  - d. Then, you pray that passage over your life and over your heart, begging God to plant that truth in your heart and grow it to bear much fruit.
  - e. And when you've done that with the Word, when you have stored up that Word in your heart, it becomes an indomitable barrier that shields your heart from the sway of sin. It's really hard for sin to steal the day when the Word is sitting supreme in your heart!

## II. A Solution for the Heart (vv12-16)

- A) So you've got this resolution, now how are you going to keep it? David starts with worship that is drenched in dependence upon God. "Blessed" "teach"
- B) Now, follow this with me.
  1. If we want to get to v9, keeping our way pure by guarding it according to the Word, by v11, storing up God's Word in my heart so that I might not sin against God, if we want to get there this year, then we've got to get to vv14 & 16. V9 is the goal. V10 is the resolution. v11 is the plan. But how are we going to keep the game plan? That's where we fail. We are good at making resolutions. We are good at making plans. Where we fail is in sticking to the plan. We've got to get to vv14 and 16.

2. v14 - read - Did you hear that? David delights in the Word of God as much as one would delight in obtaining every source of wealth in the world! The game plan is to saturate our hearts in the Word so as to be pure before God. So we want to read God's Word and store up God's Word, and be exposed to God's Word and sit under God's Word. And to do that all year, we need more than will. We need delight and joy to drive us! If we want to stick to it, we have to love it – delight in it – joy in it – desire it!
3. v16 - read - If we delight in God's Word, then our time in God's Word will not be a checklist; it will be life - natural.
4. But how do you get there? v15 is the answer - read. All the delighting of vv14 and 16 are surrounding the meditating of v15. Meditation on the Word breeds delight in God's Word. It sounds like circular reasoning I know, but it is nonetheless as true as true can be.
  - a. Time in God's Word, meditation in God's Word will spur a deep satisfaction in God's Word. A deep satisfaction in God's Word will spur deeper commitment, allegiance, and meditation in God's Word.
  - b. The longer you dwell in God's Word, the more you delight in it.
  - c. The more you delight in it, the deeper you go. The deeper you go, the more you live it because you love it! Our goal is not to finish a reading plan. Our goal is to meet with God each day in His Word! To delight in Him. To see Him!
  - d. How can a young man keep his way pure? He's got to place his heart under God's Word. So he makes a resolution and comes up with a plan to do just that. Now, how's he going to stick to his plan? He's got to delight in God's Word in order to dwell in God's Word. Well, how's he going to do that? By meditating on God's Word. Discipline in the Word will eventually give way to delight in the Word! And delight will give way to change!

Conclusion - Turn our resolutions in prayers that have the glory of God as their end and not mere self improvement! Have a plan, develop a strategy to constantly be placing our hearts under God's Word.