

Introduction

Did you realize that today is the final Sunday of the year? AND that it is the last Sunday of the decade? We leave the decade of the teens and enter the twenties. Remember Y2k? Every one was afraid we would experience all kinds of troubles due to possible computer glitches. Little if any of those fears were realized. And yet a number of earth shaking events transpired in the aftermath of y2k. The twin towers were obliterated on 9/11/2001 along with almost 3,000 lives. There was war with Iraq and then war against militant Islamic terrorists in Afghanistan. Homosexuality experienced increasing affirmation, and homosexual marriage was affirmed by the Supreme Court of the United States of America.

Can you imagine what lies before us in the next two decades? I have no doubt that the pressure against righteousness and against Christ-followers is going to increase. I think of Jesus warning Peter: "Satan has demanded to have you that he might sift you as wheat." It is imperative that we be prepared whatever may befall.

And yet what I want to share with you this morning is not primarily fueled by an obsession with the ominous and foreboding. A new decade sets before us a sense of a fresh start for the long haul and opportunity for much growth and accomplishment. Standing on the threshold of a new decade, we have the opportunity to commit ourselves to priorities that will set a course toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. So I will be emphasizing one particular resolve I hope we will all make this morning. We find that resolution highlighted in Psalm 27.

[Read Scripture and Pray]

I. Reasons to Resolve

Before jumping into the text this morning, I want to take a little time to commend resolutions to you. I sometimes hear people say they don't want to make any resolutions because they are a setup for failure. "Why would I want to make a resolution to do something when I know I am not going to

keep it?" Well if you have that attitude, a resolution is pretty much worthless. But a resolution is simply a commitment to do something. It is a decision to act. It is a determination to accomplish a purpose. It is a plan to pursue. Every time I read the Bible, I should be calling upon myself to resolve, to determine, to decide to act, to do something in light of what it says. The Bible is replete with instances of resolve. Repentance is not only a sorrow over my sins but itself is a resolve not to do those sins any longer. Jesus calls for resolve when he declares, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Doing what Jesus calls for here requires resolve. So we see that living life for Christ requires resolve.

In addition, the successful pursuit of a goal requires resolve. The Apostle Paul indicated his goal in living was to attain to the resurrection from the dead. And he resolved to do everything necessary for attaining that goal. He said, "Not that I have already obtained this or already am perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12-14)

Resolve is especially needed when the process is long. It is reflected in what Paul just wrote. The need for resolve is apparent in the manner in which Jesus characterizes the way to the kingdom. He says that the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life. To stay on that path demands resolve. Proverbs 13:11 says that "wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it." The life of the Christian is not a once-and-done kind of life. It is day-by-day. It is a multitude of battles not just one great war. Therefore, one must possess resolve to keep going when the battle rages on.

Resolve is also the difference between handling life or being handled by life. It is the difference between riding in the passenger seat or driving the car. Melissa and I gave Titus a wagon for Christmas. We thought he would like it. Well we got out Christmas day in the beauty of the day, and strapped Titus in that wagon and began to pull, and he ate it up. All smiles, he

squealed with delight and laughed with pure joy. He enjoyed the ride, but I was the driver. One day Titus will not be content with just sitting there, he will want to be the one who does the pulling. That is where the action is. That is where the resolve is. Life is like that. On the one hand we can enjoy the ride because God is in control. But his call is that we act. If we are unwilling to resolve, we are like the sluggard in Proverbs 13:4. The soul of the sluggard craves but gets nothing. Meanwhile the soul of the diligent is richly supplied. The spiritual sluggard says, "I sure would like to be strong spiritually. I would like to stop sinning. I would like to know God better. But I can't." The spiritual man of resolve plugs away day after day without relenting, and his soul is full. Those who resolve to live in righteousness are like a tree firmly planted while the wicked are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Do you see not just the positive side of resolve but in fact the necessity? You can't repent without resolve. You can't be established without resolve. You cannot be fruitful without resolve. You cannot get to heaven without resolve. Now, with this in mind, I want to challenge every follower of Christ to one particular resolution for the new decade. Here it is: to seek to know God. You could also put it this way, to seek the face of God. Let that be your overriding resolve for the next decade.

II. Reasons to Resolve to Know God Better

A. Confidence and Courage and Resounding Joy are grounded in the knowledge of God. This truth is the theme of Psalm 27, a psalm of David.

1. Let's look at his confidence and courage. Notice verses 1-3. (Read).
 - 1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
 - 2 When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.
 - 3 Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.

And now verse 5

For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

Now, go down to verse 14, he speaks to his own soul

Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

David is unafraid; he is confident; and he is courageous in the face of the strongest and most powerful enemies. Evildoers and adversaries do not frighten him. Armies are not a cause of fear. War does not shake his soul. In verse 12, he mentions assailants with hateful intentions for him. They say false things about him and have nothing but venom in their hearts. Nevertheless, he remains assured that he will see good.

2. Not only is David unafraid, he is also overflowing with joy.

Look at verse 6. "And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord."

David's confidence and courage are not cocky. He is not self-assured. He is not arrogant. He does exult. He rejoices. He is deeply happy. And he brings that joyous celebration before the Lord.

3. From where do this joy and confidence and courage come? They come from the Lord. It comes because "The Lord is my salvation; the Lord is the stronghold of my life; the Lord makes my enemies stumble and fall; the Lord will hide me in his shelter;" the Lord is sovereign over his adversaries. And even though his own father and mother might forsake him, the Lord WILL NOT! "He will take me in." David is aware that he is exalted above his enemies. His head is lifted up above them. But the reason is not in him. The reason for his joy is that it is the Lord who hides him, conceals him, and lifts him high.

4. Why does David have such confidence in the Lord? The answer is because he is resolved to know God. His resolve to know has been greeted with knowledge. He knows God. He knows who he is and he knows what he is like. And so he knows he is faithful. He knows he is a refuge. He knows he is sovereign. He knows he is a God who will shelter his people. He is a God who will use even one's enemies for good in his life. But David cannot get enough. He is resolved to keep seeking to know God better.

Verse 4 sets forth this telling resolve.

"One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after:"

This sounds so much like the apostle Paul in Philippians! One thing surpasses all others. One thing stands out. One thing is more important than all others. One thing is more valuable than all the others. One thing is the greatest blessing a human can know. One thing is the most important undertaking of a person's life. One thing is the most captivating and satisfying pursuit a human can know. It is this one thing that I ask God for. And it is this one thing that I seek after. I spend my life to take hold of this one thing. Everything else is garbage. This is the pearl of great price. This is the treasure of my heart. I will not rest in my pursuit.

And that one thing is to know God. See how David puts it: "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple." David wants something he cannot have in a concrete way. The inner place of the tabernacle in the midst of the people of Israel was off limits to all but the priests and but once a year did the high priest enter the holy of holies on the day of atonement. But metaphorically he is crying out for a deep and unending apprehension of the beauty and glory and majesty of who God is. His is a beauty so unique that one would never tire of gazing at it though it captivate his entire attention for all eternity. The word inquire suggests meditation. He wants to meditate on the glory and exquisite nature of the person and being of God. This is the one thing that matters. This is the one thing that fuels his joy. This is one thing that support him in the whelming flood, in the midst of battle, in the face of fierce enemies.

Now look down to verse 8. "You have said, 'Seek My Face.' My heart says to you, 'Your face, Lord, do I seek.'"

David, speaking to the Lord, indicates that the Lord has urged him to seek his face. The Lord has exhorted David to resolve to know him. It is the desire of God that his people have this priority, this drive, this determination to seek him. When you look at someone's face you look on the fullest physical expression of who they are. When I see your face I see your expression, your passion, your anger without a word. This is God's cry for David to know him. But he must seek to know him. Deep relationships in

which people understand one another do not happen all of a sudden. They happen over time and through experience. God calls you and me to this pursuit as well. We need to seek the Lord in order to know him.

David replies to the invitation of the Lord in the enthusiastic affirmative. My heart says to you, "Your face Lord so I seek." Can you observe the intense interaction between God and this man. Clearly God delights to make himself known. He will be found by those who seek him this way. God values in people the heart drive to know him. He says through Jeremiah, "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

God delights when human beings delight in what delights him. You know if you want to give a Christmas present that someone will really like, you have to know them at least a little. Otherwise you are operating purely on the assumption that they will like whatever you like. At Christmas perhaps like no other time you learn that different people have different tastes and desires. When sinful men come to God, if they presume to think that God loves what they love, they have it all backwards. Being darkened in sin humans love what God despises. We have to know God to love what he loves and worship as he deserves. And so he delights when people stop interpreting all of life in terms of what they know and in terms of what they desire and in terms of what they think—when they are willing to count whatever is gain to them as loss for the sake of Christ, indeed to count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

In fact to love God is to seek to know God. If you think you love God but do not really care to know him, your love is a sham. You can please the Lord in no greater way than to seek to know him because that is what he wants. Hosea 6 bears this out. The prophet calls upon the rebellious people to turn from their sin to seek to know the Lord. He says, "So let us know, let us press on to know to know the Lord." And the Lord speaks through the prophet.

What shall I do with you, Oh Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away. Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

He says to them that their love is like a morning cloud and like the dew that disappears with the sunrise. That is why he sent them the prophets to smite their hearts. He does not want a show of love in sacrifice and burnt offerings; he wants love from their hearts. That is a love which delights in who he is. It wants to know him.

B. Do you want confidence, courage, and joy? Who doesn't? Here is how to get them. Know God.

Daniel 11:32 says it bluntly, "The people who know their God shall stand firm and take action." And there is no book quite like Daniel in which that appears so clearly. Because they know God, the Hebrew children refuse to bow when the pressure is on. And they go to the fiery furnace convinced that God is able to deliver them, and the Lord jumps in with them. Because he knows God, Daniel refuses to stop praying to God when a law is passed against it. And he goes to the Lion's den, but the Lord shut the lions' mouths. Because he knows God, Daniel prays with honor and reverence and with great concern for the glory and reputation of God. And he is loved and heard.

Do you want to please God and be loved by God? Do you want to stand strong and take action? Do you want to have a prayer life to which God responds in mighty works? Know God.

Do you want to possess the only thing worth boasting about before God? Know God.

Do you want eternal life? Here is what it is: to know God. In his great prayer recorded in John 17, Jesus says, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this

is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

Conclusion

Knowing God begins with looking to Jesus in faith. Paul writes the Corinthians, “God . . . give[s] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” To seek the knowledge of God is impossible apart from knowing and trusting in Christ. Your sins separate you from God, but Christ Jesus came and satisfied God for the righteous judgment you deserve. You can be reconciled him and begin the path of knowing him if you will turn to Jesus today.

If you are trusting Christ (this will be most of you), then I am urging you today to make a resolution, not just a new year’s resolution. This is the time to think not merely in terms of one year but in terms of a decade. And your resolves for a decade should impact your resolves for the rest of your life. Let 2020 be a year that is just the beginning of a life spent seeking the face of God, to know him accurately, as the Bible, His word, reveals him, and to seek him ardently day-by-day in the spirit of dwelling in his presence, gazing on his beauty, and meditating on his glory. Knowing God is what you were made for. Knowing God is what you were made to enjoy.

Just as a help, I am providing a handout today that will steer you toward resources that will assist you in this worthy pursuit. It lists scriptures to memorize and books to read.

2020 Vision – Resolve to Seek to Know God Better

“One thing I have asked of the Lord”

Scriptures to Memorize:

Psalm 27:4

Psalm 27:8

Psalm 63:1-8

Psalm 145:5

Daniel 11:32

Hosea 6:3

Hosea 6:6

John 17:3

2 Corinthians 4:4

2 Corinthians 4:6

Philippians 3:7-11

Books to Read that will fuel the fire of your resolve to know God:

The Bible – As you read God’s word, ask Him to reveal Himself to you. Ascribe what you know about God to him in praise and worship and in the way you relate to him.

Knowing God by J. I. Packer

Desiring God by John Piper

The Pleasures of God by John Piper

Behold Your God: Rethinking God Biblically by John Snyder

Behold Your God: The Weight of Majesty by John Snyder

The Holiness of God by R. C. Sproul

One Holy Passion by R. C. Sproul

The God You Can Know by Dan Dehaan

The Attributes of God by A. W. Pink

The Knowledge of the Holy by A. W. Tozer

Trusting God by Jerry Bridges