

RESOLUTION OR SOLUTION?

By the time you read this, if you made any New Year's resolutions, you have probably already broken them, or will soon do so. I mean, if we really wanted to do what our resolutions called for, why wouldn't we start doing them in December when we thought of them instead of saying "beginning January 1st, I will....?"

I remember making a whole lot of New Year's resolutions throughout the years—mostly dealing with my weight, beginning a regular exercise program, improving my eating habits, and even some spiritual issues. However, the reality is I cannot ever remember keeping any of those resolutions through to completion. Oh, I would go out and buy a new sweat suit, a new pair of running shoes, join the gym, and even buy a head of lettuce and a few carrots, but by the next January, the sweat suit was stored away, I only wore the running shoes when my feet hurt from being overweight, the gym membership has expired, the lettuce and carrots had long ago dropped off my grocery list, and I was fifteen pounds heavier than the year before!

I am ashamed to say that the spiritual resolutions I made had about the same results. I was determined to discipline myself to spend time reading my Bible every day, to pray more, and to stop committing certain sins (some of commission and some of omission). I really wanted to make myself a better person. Every year I was sure that this would be the year that I would get my spiritual life and sin problems worked out. But, when the next January came around, I had to make the same resolutions all over again and my life had changed little.

Why is it that the old adage; "New Year's resolutions are made to be broken" ring so true in our lives? Why is it that we just do not seem able to live them out?

If we look at the life of the apostle Paul in scripture, especially as recorded in Romans chapters 7 & 8, (please read both chapters), we will see that he too had trouble trying to conquer his own problems, trying to whip Himself into shape. In fact, Paul said in Romans 7:15-20: "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Paul went on to say that in his inner being he delighted in God's law, but that there was another law that his body wanted to follow and that was to satisfy the desires of the flesh. He was at war within himself—a war between good and evil—between sinfulness and righteousness. He declared in 7:24: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

Paul saw his failures, he saw his sin, he saw his inability to follow through with his resolutions and to fix his own life. In desperation, he said "Who will rescue me from the body of death?" In the next verse 7:25, he answered his own question: "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Paul declared that in his mind he knew he should be living for God, but in his body, he really wanted to live for himself. How many of us face that same struggle? We know that if we stood before the Lord Jesus living our lives like we are at this moment, we would be ashamed and be condemned to die, but we realize, through experience, that we are powerless within ourselves to change the way we are.

Paul went on to say in chapter 8, that through the shed blood of Jesus, the Spirit of life sets us free from the law of sin and death. As Christians, we no longer have to live with a war raging inside us. We no longer have to live defeated lives committing the same sins over and over again and living with the guilt. When we accept Christ's forgiveness the Holy Spirit comes and takes up residence in our lives. He gives us eternal life, He gives us a new mind, creates in us a new heart, and gives us the power to live victoriously over our sinful nature that seeks to control us. Scripture makes it clear that you and I do have a choice to make: We can either continue to try to fix ourselves as we have in the past and continue to keep falling short and breaking our resolutions and commitments to God, to others and to ourselves; or we can surrender our lives (heart, mind and body) to the Lordship of Jesus Christ who will set us free not only from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin! It is a change of mind, a change of will, a change of lifestyle—all that follow a change of heart; a change that only Christ can make when we sincerely turn control of our lives over to Him and trust Him to be our Lord and our Savior! This is the 'faith' and 'repentance' that Paul spoke of in Acts 20:21 when he said: "I have declared to both Jews and Greeks alike (in other words to everyone), that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus."

When we surrender our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, then and only then can we experience the peace of God, and be at peace with ourselves, with others and with God. Romans 8:14-16 says: "Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, Abba (daddy), Father. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." Oh what peace! Oh what joy! Oh what contentment!--Safe in the arms and the care of God the Father.

This new year, instead of making resolutions that depend on your power to accomplish, call out to God and surrender your life (heart, mind and body) to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He is life's Solution! Make a lifetime commitment and then just follow Him one moment at a time, one day at a time. Therein lies internal and eternal life, peace, contentment, and joy.

Blessings,
Glenn