

Resolve” (1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5)(12.1.19)

1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5 (NIV84)

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.

26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

2 When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: Resolve

LET US PRAY.

INTRODUCTION:

A certain church had a beautiful stained-glass window just behind the pulpit. It depicted Jesus Christ on the cross. One Sunday there was a guest minister who was much smaller than the regular pastor. A little girl listened to the guest for a time, then turned to her mother and asked, “Where is the man who usually stands there so we can’t see Jesus?”

Oh my. That’s a punch in the gut. John the Baptist said, “He [Jesus] must become greater and I must become less.” Unfortunately, it is all too common for the preacher to dominate the pulpit instead of the message of

Jesus the Christ. Too often the personality and gifts of the pastor are what attracts people to a church instead of the sweetness of our Savior. Our enemy, Satan, savors and celebrates this fleshly perspective because it is not of God.

But Paul takes it to another level and resolves to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. Some hold Jesus up as a great teacher, and he was. Some hold Jesus up as a great example, and he was. Some hold up the resurrected Jesus, which we should; but, not without going through the crucifixion. You can't get to Easter with going through that foreboding Friday.

What causes us to look away from the cross of Christ? We must face the reason for Jesus' death and our part in his death sentence. We must realize the debt that we owe Jesus. We must realize how seriously God considers sin and how strongly He calls us to godly living. We must recognize our total dependence on the grace of God. We must embrace humility and gratitude.

BODY:

If we call ourselves Christians, if we have made the Lord Jesus master of our lives, then we must make sure that we do not block the view of Jesus. Our actions of love, kindness, mercy, and holiness should point towards Jesus, should glorify Jesus, and not ourselves. We should avoid sins of omission as well as sins of commission. In fact, our lives should reveal our Jesus to those around us.

Paul does not say we should know about Jesus; the facts and details that make you a winner of Bible Trivia Pursuit. Alexander Maclaren says it this way: "Paul determined to know nothing but Jesus, and to know everything in Jesus, and Jesus in everything." This knowing embraces Jesus in all his offices. Jesus is our prophet, priest, and king in order that we are wholly instructed, saved, and governed by Him.

Last week, the message was "Crucified with Christ." So, this knowing insists on a sharing the experience of his crucifixion, to feel the power of it; to be crucified to the world. This knowing is making our life in Christ the premier priority about which everything else must be subordinate in importance and in our passion.

Some might say the cross is all fine and good for evangelism, but why does a Christian need to be ever mindful of it? Having your centering point be the Cross of Christ focuses your sanctification process. We are called to a life of sacrifice. Matthew 16:24-25 (NIV84)

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

So this is Paul's resolution, to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. As the first day of the Christian New Year, it seems perfectly appropriate to talk about resolutions. Normally, our culture contemplates resolutions one month from now; but, let us get the jump on them. Today is the first day of our Advent Season, the first day of December, and the first day of the Christian New Year.

You all know that resolutions are much easier to make than to keep. Most people give up on their resolutions very early in their New Year. The reason? Lack of RESOLVE. In fact, I champion this hypothesis that one of the great gaps and deficiencies of our society is a lack of resolve. You have to have resolve for resolutions to have

any meaning, any power, any foundation for the future.

In my Merriam Webster Dictionary, the word resolution is directly followed by the word resolve. For the most part, resolution is a noun and resolve is a verb. We NEED action for the resolution to be realized. This requires a clearly defined idea, goal, or destination.

A resolution is the act of analyzing a complex notion into simpler ones. Our God is not a god of chaos but a god of order. The enemy and the things of this world complicate; they confuse; they add stress; they try to bring you to a state of unrest and weariness tossed to and fro by the winds of worry.

In Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV84), Paul tells us,

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

A resolution is the point in a literary work at which the chief dramatic complication is worked out. Knowing our Lord Jesus and Him crucified simplifies our lives. We begin to have a true understanding of who we are. Our purpose becomes clear. The truth becomes evident and making right decisions is more straight forward. Resolution is a measure of the sharpness of an image or of the fineness for a particular device. When we resolve to know Christ and Him crucified, other things in our life come into a finer focus. We are seeing things more rightly. Although it seems strange to say so, when I committed my life to following Jesus, it seemed that previously everything had appeared in two dimensions; but, I began to see in three dimensions.

When I first read this particular definition of resolution, I laughed because it seemed in no way applicable. "Resolution is the analysis of a vector into two or more vectors of which it is the sum." Then it hit me. Jesus on the cross is the resolution of the vertical vector pointing from earth to our Father in heaven and the horizontal vector pointing towards humankind all over the earth. Jesus Christ reconciled us with our Father on that cross. He resolved the requirements of justice for our perfectly holy Father.

To resolve is to be determined, which is the word that the King James uses. It is to declare or decide. Resolve is to be fixed in purpose. It means to reach a firm decision. Through consultation, analysis, and deliberation, you make something clear and understandable.

Another definition of resolve is to break up or separate like the way a prism separates light into its different components. I love this concept. Over the last couple of months, I have seen a couple of videos of people who were color blind. Because of the advancements in technology, with special glasses they are able to see color for the first time. The whole world looks differently to them to the point they are brought to tears. They are filled with joy. Knowing Jesus like this gives us a color-filled, a joy-filled, perspective.

In music, a composer will introduce an element called dissonance. It is meant to increase interest, to create tension, to cause some unsettledness. This is meant to be temporary. It is meant to be resolved. When the composer does resolve that dissonance there is a satisfaction. There is a contentedness. Knowing Christ and Him crucified resolves the dissonance in our lives.

Oswald Chambers lamented, "The [religious] movements of to-day have none of the rugged reality of the New Testament about them; there is nothing about them that needs the death of Jesus Christ, all that is required is a pious atmosphere, and prayer and devotion. This type of experience is not supernatural nor miraculous, it did not cost the passion of God, it is not dyed in the blood of the Lamb, not stamped with the hall-mark of the Holy Ghost. It has not that mark on it which makes men say, as they look with awe and wonder—"That is the work of God Almighty.' That and nothing else is what the New Testament talks about."

CONCLUSION:

On the 40th anniversary of Alexander Maclaren's preaching in his church, he chose our key verse for his sermon: For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. He says, "So, then, Apostle [Paul's] conception of his theme was — the biography of a Man, with especial emphasis laid on one act in His history — His death. Christianity is Christ, and Christ is Christianity.

His relation to the truth that He proclaimed, and to the truths that may be deducible from the story of His life and death, is altogether different from the relation of any other founder of a religion to the truths that he has proclaimed. For in these you can accept the teaching, and ignore the teacher. But you cannot do that with Christianity; 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life'; and in that revealing biography, which is the preacher's theme, the palpitating heart and center is the death upon the Cross.

So, whatever else Christianity comes to be — and it comes to be a great deal else — the principle of its growth, and the germ which must vitalize the whole, lie in the personality and the death of Jesus Christ."

We are beginning a new Christian Year. What a perfect time to make our faithful resolutions. I resolve to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

I can think of no better conclusion to this message than to sing Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross #301.

1. Jesus, keep me near the cross;
there a precious fountain,
free to all, a healing stream,
flows from Calvary's mountain.

Refrain:

In the cross, in the cross,
be my glory ever,
till my raptured soul shall find
rest beyond the river.

2. Near the cross, a trembling soul,
love and mercy found me;
there the bright and morning star
sheds its beams around me.

(Refrain)

3. Near the cross! O Lamb of God,
bring its scenes before me;
help me walk from day to day
with its shadow o'er me.

(Refrain)

4. Near the cross I'll watch and wait,
hoping, trusting ever,
till I reach the golden strand
just beyond the river.

(Refrain)

Amen and amen. Let us pray.