



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Keeping Our New Year's Resolutions

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COLOSSIANS 3:1-2; EPHESIANS 4:32

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Many of us at this time of year make some kind of New Year's resolutions. We recognize areas of our lives in which we need to change and grow. It may be related to improving our health and fitness. We may recognize a bad habit or character quality we need to improve. We may want to become a better spouse or parent. The end of the old year and the beginning of the new gives us a chance to evaluate our lives and make a commitment to change and be different. Unfortunately, we all know what often happens to most of our New Year's resolutions. In the matter of a few weeks or months those commitments fall by the wayside as we weaken in our resolve to follow through. The question is how we follow through on our resolutions and commitments so that we see genuine change in our lives. We can actually find an answer to this question from life here in the West Virginia capitol.

Every session the Senate and the House make a number of resolutions. These statements declare an action to pursue, a stand for or against and issue, or a person to honor. If we consider these Senate and House resolutions, it may help us in keeping our own resolutions and make real changes in our lives.

IF WE CONSIDER SENATE AND HOUSE RESOLUTIONS, IT MAY HELP US IN KEEPING OUR OWN RESOLUTIONS AND MAKE REAL CHANGES IN OUR LIVES.

Each of our Senate and House resolutions begin with a series of "Whereas" statements. "Whereas" is a conjunction that means "it being the case", "considering that", or "in view of the fact". It could be simply replaced by the word "since". These are followed by the "Resolved" statements which refer to the decision or commitment to take action. The "Whereas" statements present the reason for the "Resolved" statements. The "Resolved" statements are based upon and flow out of the "Whereas" statements.

We can use this to help us understand an important truth about the Christian life. The changes we want to make in our lives such as changing a bad habit or character quality or

becoming a better spouse or parent, can be compared to the "Resolved" statements in the resolutions. What is often missing from our resolutions or commitments are the reasons, the "Whereas" statements upon which those commitments are based. Let us look at some of the lessons we can learn from the resolutions in our state capitol and from God's Word.

THE "WHEREAS" AND THE "RESOLVED" IN THE BIBLE

Like our legislative resolutions, the Bible is full of "Whereas" and "Resolved" statements. The "Whereas" statements are the truths revealed to us about God, Who He is, and all that He has done for us through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is the statement of accomplished fact of who we are as believers once we have repented and put our faith in Christ.

The "Resolved" statements are the calls to Christian living, the challenges to live out the character, attitudes, and actions resulting from being a follower of Christ. Much of the Bible, especially in the New Testament, follows this pattern. Here are just two examples:

*Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. **Colossians 3:1-2***

*Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. **Ephesians 4:32***

Notice both passages present standards of Christians living to which we should be resolved. In Colossians it is seeking things above and setting our minds on things above. If you read on in Colossians 3 we see that Paul gives quite a list of things we should resolve to stop doing and start doing. He says in 3:5 we should cease from "immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed". He goes on in verses 8-9 to describe sinful actions with which we all struggle, particularly in politics and the capitol: anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, and lying. He then goes on to describe the things a Christian should do or exhibit in their lives: a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with and

INTERIM BIBLE STUDY

TUESDAY, JANUARY 8, 12:00 NOON **TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)**

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forgiving each other, and above all, show love for one another. These are all actions or qualities we should be resolved to either be rid of or to develop and practice. But notice they are all based on a "Whereas" statement in verse 1: "If you have been raised up with Christ". This statement describes the condition of one who has repented, trusted Christ, and become a follower of Him. If that is true about us, then it will impact the way we live in our daily lives.

Ephesians 4:32 gives a clearer, more direct example. The "Resolved" statement is that we should be kind, tender-hearted, and forgive each other. The "Whereas" statement is that God has forgiven us. Again, note how the challenge to forgive each other is based on the truth that God has forgiven us.

As you read the Bible you should note that it is always laid out this way. The challenges to Christian character and Christian living are always based upon the truth of the Gospel and who we are as children of God. Paul's letters are mostly structured this way. The first half of His letter will be a statement of some grand truth about God, Jesus Christ, and the gospel. The second part will be Christian attitudes and actions that result from that truth. (See Romans 12:1 and Ephesians 4:1 and note the "therefore" turning point in those letters.)

FOCUSING ON THE "RESOLVED" AND NEGLECTING THE "WHEREAS"

Our problem is we often focus on the "Resolved" parts of the Bible and neglect the "Whereas". Many look at being a Christian as primarily adhering to a certain list of standards or rules. If asked what you have to do to be a Christian, to be right with God, or to go to heaven, they will respond that you must be a good person, follow the 10 commandments, or try to live like Jesus. This totally ignores the "Whereas" part of the Bible which tells us that each one of us has sinned against an infinitely holy God. The punishment for that sin is judgment and death. God sent His own Son to take that punishment and judgment upon Himself. It is only through faith in Christ that we have our sins forgiven and find new life in Him. It is as a

result of this new life that we begin to live out those attitudes and actions which define the Christian life.

Even as believers, we can neglect the "whereas" when we begin to make resolutions to change an area of our lives. We recognize sinful attitudes, actions, or characteristics we need to change, and we resolve to do so. But we may neglect thinking about the gospel truth upon which those changes should be based. Real change only comes because of who we are as followers of Christ. True growth is only by the grace of God working in our lives. Forgetting this will lead to pride and self-righteousness if we do succeed in "following the rules" or to despair and guilt when we fail.

If we are a believer and a follower of Christ making resolutions to change and grow, they will be more effective if we think of them in terms of a formal statehouse resolution:

Whereas: I have sinned against a Holy God and am therefore under His judgment; and

Whereas: Christ has lived a perfect life and taken my punishment and judgment upon Himself on the cross so my sinfulness can be given to Him and His goodness given to me; and

Whereas: Through repentance and faith in Him my sins have been forgiven, I have eternal life, and now have complete righteousness before God

Therefore, be it resolved that I will live a life worthy of the position I now have in Christ.

- **WE MUST REALIZE THAT SALVATION CAN ONLY COME THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST AND WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US.**
- **AS WE RESOLVE TO MAKE CHANGES IN OUR LIVES, WE SHOULD DO SO BASED UPON WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US AND WHO WE ARE THROUGH FAITH IN HIM**
- **WE CAN MAKE ANY SPECIFIC RESOLUTION TO CHANGE IN THIS WAY. THIS WILL HELP UP US FOLLOW THROUGH AND SEE REAL CHANGE IN OUR LIVES.**