

## Re-resolving the New Year! Hebrews 13:20-21

### Hebrews 13:20-21 (esv)

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,<sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

We are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the new year 2024. It has already been 1 year since we started meeting in this beautiful building.

Therefore, the title of my message today is Re-resolving the New Year. Every year beginning in January, we might make some sort of 'resolution' or promise to ourselves, and it always is geared to becoming a better individual. I resolve to eat healthy and exercise more; I resolve to have better savings and spending habits; I resolve to spend more time with family; I resolve to not make any more resolutions that I cannot keep! And by the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of January, we are often finished with our failed resolution!

Did you know that God made a 'resolution' too! But He did NOT fail, He kept His Word. What was God's resolution?

### Genesis 3:15 (niv)

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will **crush** your head, and you will strike His heel.

God had just created the earth with mankind. And soon, mankind sinned by listening to the words of the serpent and as a result God pronounced judgement on the serpent.

However, the 'offspring' of the woman (Jesus) who crushed Satan, paid the ultimate price in doing so. He had to die on the cross for sinners! His death, burial and resurrection ended up 'crushing' Satan.

How did that happen? Because now, the power of sin (which is eternal separation from God) had become null and void. Sin had **NO** power to separate a man or woman, who accepted Jesus' sacrifice, from having fellowship with God! This was the reversal of what occurred in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned and lost fellowship with God.

But Genesis 3:15 is simply a foretelling of a future event. When did God make a 'resolution' to fix the problem of sin? The disciples Peter and John both mention God's resolution.

### **1 Peter 1:18-20 (nlt)**

18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. 19 It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. 20 God **chose** Him (*Jesus*) as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days He has been revealed for your sake.

God resolved (promised) that Jesus would be the solution to a problem that was yet to occur!

In Revelation 13:8 as well, John mentions that 'Jesus, the Lamb that was slain from the creation/foundation of the world'.

So God, knew that mankind would sin, and therefore He resolved to fix the problem. God chose Jesus as a ransom for us long before the foundation of the world. In God's mind Jesus was the 'Lamb that was already slain' before the first building block for the earth was even laid.

### **1. God's first resolution was to send Jesus to save us from the effects of sin and He completed that task.**

God resolved to send Jesus to save mankind and He kept His resolution! If **God keeps His resolutions**, we need to find out what other resolutions did He make!

We will study one more resolution or promise that God made.

### **Romans 8:29 (nkjv)**

For whom He foreknew (knew in advance or knew of beforehand), He also predestined **to be conformed to the image of His Son**, that He (Jesus) might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Therefore, God also resolved that we who are saved by faith, will have to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus. This is a very tall order! Calvary was the not the end of God's job. It was just the beginning of a long construction project! Or you could say a 're-construction' project. For us, we have to learn how to live as children of God. **It is God's resolve or promise and desire that we become like His Son Jesus.**

Therefore, with every passing year, God has the same resolution for us! My son, my daughter, needs to become more like my Son Jesus.

### **Philippians 2:13 (nlt)**

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.

For it is God who works in you both to (to do His) will and to do for His good pleasure. (nkjv)

Here, Paul is reminding us again that even though Jesus is now sitting on the right hand of God the Father, there is still ongoing work.

**God is working in us.** Not forcing us, as we still have free will, but lovingly helping us have a greater desire for Him so that we will want to accept the power being offered to us to do that which pleases Him.

God wants us to do His will for His good pleasure. That is what Jesus did.

## **2. God has resolved to conform us to the image of His Son**

Remember the first resolution? God finished that on the Cross of Calvary. God always keeps His resolution!

And if God has resolved to continue working **in our life**, our next question is, what is our role in all of His working?

I remember learning to ride a bicycle as a child. My time was **before** training wheels, so someone patiently held onto the seat, helped me balance and kept running behind me holding onto the bicycle seat. Up and down the street we went, till they let go and I was able to ride by myself for a short distance before falling. Then they picked me up and we started all over again. With practice after a while nobody needed to hold onto the bicycle seat and soon after, I fell down less often and eventually, I had my brother

sitting in front on the bar and another sitting on a luggage rack behind me and I would effortlessly balance and move 3 individuals on 1 bicycle. What a transformation!

Do you think any of this could have occurred if I simply had **NO desire** to ride a bike? You could have propped me all you wanted on the bicycle and ran behind me holding onto the seat, but all of that would have been a waste, because as soon as you let go of me, I would have fallen over, simply because I had **NO desire** to learn how to balance or ride a bicycle.

What is our desire?

So as this new year unfolds, I want us to ask ourselves do we have a desire to please Him? Or perhaps we can pray that God will give us that desire or increase that desire in us to please Him.

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”. Who said that? That was God testifying about Jesus as He came out of the waters of baptism. God is seeking His children to please Him.

### **3. Our desire must be to do what pleases Him.**

We already saw in Philippians 2:13 that **God is working in us**, giving us the desire and the power to do what pleases Him. And furthermore this ‘working’ that is going on has a **purpose and end goal** which is to make us conform to the image of His Son Jesus (Romans 8:29).

Therefore, question now is this: how does God accomplish this in our lives practically?

#### **Hebrews 13:20-21 (esv)**

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace... <sup>21</sup> equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

In some translations verse 21 will read as ‘make you complete in every good work to do His will’. The Greek word used here is ‘kat-ar-tid'-zo’ which is used to mean, to render, to fit, to complete, to restore or to fit out.

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace... **(do What?)**, <sup>21</sup> complete you, render you, fit you out, equip you with everything good **(Why?)** that you may do His will, **(How?)** working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

This verse opens up 4 questions for us to address and the bible provides us with answers and examples.

4. What does it mean **'God equips us with everything good'**?
5. What does it mean **'that we may do His will'**?
6. What is **'that which is pleasing in His sight'**?
7. Why does it have to be **'through Jesus Christ'**?

4. What does it mean **'God equips us with everything good'**?

If we are to believe what we just read in Romans 8:29 (God's goal is to conform us to the image of His Son) and Philippians 2:13 (God is working in us, giving us a desire for Him), that means God gives us every opportunity to develop skills (for the next part which is) to do His will.

For the child of God, EVERY opportunity can be Good! Even that which we consider as BAD, God turns it around for the good of those who love Him. Our sickness, our lost job, our destroyed car or property, our soured relationships, anything and everything that happens to us is used to equip us! The question is are we able to **SEE** God working on our behalf?

Construction worker's wheelbarrow story.

To be sure, sometimes, we do foolish / sinful things, we still pay the consequences. Sometimes, others will cause us harm for no fault of ours, but in all of these instances, God can use the broken pieces of our life to rebuild it into something new and more valuable, provided we love Him.

Example of Joseph. Sold as a slave for no fault of his (maybe his only fault was a bragging tattler, up to that point). He could have easily withdrawn into a shell of depression and perhaps even blamed God for his predicament. But the bible says the LORD was with Joseph in all that Joseph did. (Genesis 39) Joseph used the dire 'slave situation' and did what he was supposed to do...work. God did the rest! Gave Joseph wisdom to make

correct decisions, the bible says the LORD 'caused ALL that Joseph did to succeed in his hands'. Wow. What an equipping! Potiphar took notice and promoted Joseph to 'Head Slave'. Then another crash happened, Joseph went to prison for NO fault of his. Potiphar's wife wanted to seduce Joseph and now we see recorded for the first time his heart transformation. Joseph responds to Potiphar's wife; 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' The wife falsely accused Joseph and had him imprisoned. He could have easily withdrawn into a shell of depression and perhaps even blamed God for his predicament. In prison, the bible says God gave Joseph success and he became the 'chief helper' for the prison warden. Did Joseph complain about his predicament? Not once. He used whatever 'opportunity' he was given to him as something that came from God. God was equipping Joseph. Joseph did not see this clearly at first, but later he understood what God did through all his suffering.

How do we know that?

Remember when his brothers come to him after his father Jacob dies and was buried in **Genesis 50:15-21**.

'Am I in the place of God? You meant evil against me, but God meant it (or turned it around) for good!

**God gives us the opportunity to 'equip us or outfit us or restore us' so that we may do His will**

5. What does it mean **'that we may do His will'**?

God wants us to do His will, knowingly, willingly, actively and out of our own choice not coercion. He wants us to choose His will above our own! That is what Jesus did. (Father if it is possible, please remove this cup of suffering, yet, not my will but Yours be done!).

The example I want to use here is that of Daniel's friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego formerly known as Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

God was already 'equipping them' by showing them favor in one crisis after another! First crisis: Remember the Veggie diet? They came out of that with flying colors, literally; their skin had better color than all their peers! They

knew it was NOT the vegetables that gave them success, rather it was God. Then there was Nebuchanezzar's dream crisis. They nearly lost their heads. As the order had already gone out for their execution and Daniel found favor in the last moment to get a 'temporary stay order'!

Up to this point God was 'equipping' them to trust Him and follow Him willingly. The last test recorded for the 3 friends is in Daniel 3.

This crisis saw them being tested for their faith in the one true God.

### **Daniel 3:17-18 (nkjv)**

17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and **He will** deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 **But if not**, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

They willingly, actively, and without any coercion did God's will and as a result went into the flames. The rest is history! Jesus shows up in the fire! They walk around for a bit and then come out unharmed!

### **What happens when we don't do His will willingly or actively or wantingly?**

We get to repeat a few things till we get it right! Ask the Israelites who wandered around in circles for 40 years; ever learning but never passing, always failing! It was their children who passed into the promised land. The bible calls that generation 'stiff necked', hard hearted, unbelievers. Because even after witnessing the parting of the Red sea and eating manna and quail and drinking water flowing from a rock, they still did not believe in God. They never did His will willingly or actively. They had to be forced and coerced into obedience to God's will. Their hearts were hard.

Are we also like them? Not doing anything pleasing in His sight?

### 6. What is '**that which is pleasing in His sight**'?

The key words are 'pleasing in His sight'. God can SEE everything we do. Therefore, EVERYTHING that we do is already in His SIGHT. Whether it be good or bad. We cannot hide anything.

So, what is the meaning of '**pleasing in His sight**'? Is it simply doing good?

We have we learnt so far:

-He equips us,

-To do His will

-now He works in us **that which is pleasing in His sight.**

## **What is it that thing which pleases God the most?**

Is it simply doing good deeds?

### **Hebrews 11:6 (esv)**

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. So what is 'faith'?

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is believing God at His Word.

God says He exists, we believe His word.

God says we need to be saved from sin and the effects of sin, we believe it.

God says Jesus is the sacrifice made for our sin, we believe it.

God says He is working in our life to conform us to His image, we believe it.

God says He will come back to take us to be with Him, we believe it.

Believing God's word is faith and faith is what got Abraham justified in God's presence, long before Jesus came into the world to die for the sin of mankind. Genesis 15:6 says Abraham believed God's word and God counted it as righteousness!

Hebrews 11 talks about a long list individuals that believed God's word and promise to them individually.

**6. God is working in our lives to increase our faith in Him.** Because faith pleases Him.

### **7. Why does all of this have to be 'through Jesus Christ'?**

On the surface, one can say that since Jesus is the only Way to the Father, that's why all of what we saw so far has to be through Jesus.



That is correct, but there is more to this.

### **1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (esv)**

11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Jesus is more than just the Way to the Father. Jesus is the entire foundation on which we are supposed to stand and work our deeds. Because, if we stand and work our deeds on ANYTHING else, then it will show on Judgement Day, when everything we have done will be tested by what the bible calls 'fire'. But this is different kind of 'Fire' than what we are used to on this earth! This 'Fire' is able to distinguish between deeds that performed as part of God's will through Jesus Christ and that which isn't !

So if we are a believer in Christ but not living a life of faith, not living a life pleasing to God, there is a warning for us. We will be saved no doubt, but our works will be burned up. Our faithless works will be worthless and futile.

God wants to prevent that happening! Therefore, God is already working in your life and mine as an 'eternal life coach', He is coaching us to develop our faith in His Word, so that we do His will according to His Word. And in the end, when we are saved from His wrath, we win rewards! The Salvation part is 'free' for us as He paid the price. The eternal rewards is based entirely on our deeds of faith in Jesus Christ. That's why all of what we learnt today has to be through Jesus Christ.

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace... **(do What?)**, <sup>21</sup> EQUIP you with EVERYTHING good **(Why?)** that you may do His will, **(How?)** in FAITH (working in us that which is pleasing in His sight), through Jesus Christ **(Why?)**, so that our works will last through the Fire of Judgement Day. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.