

† The Heart of Christ – the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

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The Consoling Savior – Seven Resolves of the Believing Heart John 16:25-33 – Part 2 (16:25-28)

25 These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father. 26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; 27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. 28 I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father. 29 His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. 30 Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.” 31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? 32 Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Here we are at the first Sunday of the new year. Here we begin again to remember to write on our checks 2009 instead of 2008. Here we begin to mark off another set of birthdays, anniversaries and other special days. Here we begin to keep or fail to keep whatever resolutions, whatever determinations you have set before you; whether to lose some weight, to get organized in the home; to put off some destructive habit; or whatever it might be.

And whatever your resolve or resolves are for 2009 (and yes, I am quite aware that there are some who consider resolves at New Years to be uncouth); but wherever you find yourself, I can confidently assert that there is at least one resolution that each of you who professes to follow Jesus Christ must be willing to make; must be determined to keep and must strive after diligently; not simply because it is a duty but rather because the pursuit of this resolve proves to be most delightful and most satisfying to the soul. May I remind you that your life is made up of a number of tributaries (of activities and pursuits) that will all flow into one main and raging torrent; into one waterway that will define all that you are; one current that takes all your aims and all your ambitions and all of your activities; merging them together into a mighty river. And just what one resolve would this be? I submit to you that our desire, as believers in Jesus Christ, ought to be that every current of our lives would feed into the one rushing river of the pursuit of the glory of God.

“Oh yes, the glory of God, I know that,” we say to ourselves. The glory of God – what is it? The glory of God, what does it look like? The glory of God – that resolve to see anything and everything we do to bring honor, to promote the splendor, to magnify the wonder; to exalt the majesty; to in no way undermine or bring any kind of disrepute or blasphemy the person and word of God. To pursuit the glory of God is simple – not easy; but simple; that every decision you make and every direction you go would come under this one goal – that it be God-centered; God-honoring and God-exalting – that whatever you do; whether you take out the trash, do the dishes, wash the clothes, mow the yard, change the oil, till the garden, go to the store, do your job, go to church, witness of Christ, preach a sermon; that whether you eat or drink, you do all to the glory –

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to the honor, to the revealing, to the exaltation, to the shining forth – to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

If you remember last week, I asked the question, “What is the Christian life?” and the answer to that question was *the passionate pursuit of the holiness of Jesus* manifested in one’s life; the Christian life is pursuing the living out of the holiness and the uniqueness of the life of Christ – and this my friends is to the glory of God.

We noted last week that such a pursuit is not a one time endeavor, but a life-time quest that requires effort and self-discipline. For as holiness of life does not “just happen” in us, nor does glorifying God “just happen” in us. It is a pushing and a laboring after those things that God has said bring Him pleasure, delight and glory. Are you resolved to pursue such things? Those things God has said honor Him; delight Him and bring Him glory. The common objection to such an effort is that it leads to a dull life. That somehow living for God is not really living at all – that a life of self-denial is a life without pleasure, and without benefit. What a denial of the truth of God that says in Jesus is life, abundant life, the most satisfying life. Perhaps this is not the most appropriate of illustrations, but I remember in 1977 my parents saying that we were going to the movies and that I could invite a friend. I asked what movie and at the time all I really heard was something about “war”. At ten years old, I was not really into war movies and I wasn’t sure which of my friend would be either. I remember begging this one friend, Tommy, over and over, trying to convince him (and I guess myself) that it would be cool to go see this movie. Well, I did finally convince him and if nothing else, he and I could have a good time munching on popcorn and drinking soda. Then the movie started...big huge orchestral introduction and followed by what would terrify most ten-year olds, a huge scrolling paragraph of explanation to the movie. I thought to myself, “What have my parents done to me?” And then the next scene – in outer space; incredible ships firing lasers; explosions and uniquely garbed soldiers and a dark and sinister character named “Darth Vader”. It turned out that what I thought would be some old boring war movie proved to be one of the greatest sci-fi movies of the times. I share all of that because too often I am still like that ten-year old boy in my relationship to God, thinking that there are certain aspects of following after Him that are going to be boring and a waste of my time rather than realizing that truly in Him is all life and all excitement.

So, following after God; living our lives in the pursuit of the likeness of Jesus Christ, is not boring proposition, although we may sometimes perceive it to be; but rather is the most exhilarating and most satisfying pursuit there is. Therefore, I submit to you we must be resolved, determined, deliberate, fully fixed on such a pursuit. To that end, I offered you our text last week, John 16:25-33 and suggested that from these final words of Jesus just prior to His great prayer of John 17, we can pull out at least seven resolves, seven determinations that not only define what is the Christian life, but also direct our lives to bring glory to God. We have already discussed the first four of these seven resolves; but let me quickly remind you of them: The resolve...

1. To know the greatness of God (16:25)

Simply put, to understand clearly and plainly the great plan, love, work and character of God that comes from the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God.

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2. To know the intimacy of God (16:26)

That we have immediate and intimate or personal access to the Father because of what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross.

3. To know the love of God (16:27)

That the Father truly loves us and wants to extend to us all His benefits because we have lovingly expressed our love for Jesus Christ by obedience to His words.

4. To know the gospel of God (16:28)

Herein lies the gospel...that Jesus, the Son of God who eternally dwelt in the glories and sinless perfections of heaven, came to this sin-stricken earth and became the Son of Man so that the sons of men, by His giving His life and perfection to those who believe on Him, would become the sons of God, perfected in the righteousness and holiness of Jesus, and eternally dwell in the glories and sinless perfections of heaven with God.

Now, in addition to these four resolutions that will lead us toward a life that brings greater glory to God and are a part of the answer to the question, “What is the Christian life?” – let consider the final three we can glean from our text. The resolve to...

5. Know the Son of God (16:29-31)

29 His disciples said, “Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. 30 Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.” 31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe?”

This is one of those interesting exchanges between Jesus and His disciples that can sometimes leave us wondering, “What have we just read?” After Jesus says that He will, at some point in the future, with a seeming reference to the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, speak to them plainly, clearly and understandable fashion concerning God the Father and that the Father loves them and wants to be intimate with them and Jesus’ brief reference to the gospel, the disciples say, “Lo” – “behold” – “We get it!” “Thanks for finally being clear with us, Jesus.” “Thanks for not veiling anything from us any longer, Jesus.” Did they understand? Did they get it? I will use the wonderful pastoral device of saying, “Yes and no.” What did they now understand from what Jesus just told them? Well, we can not a few important things.

First, the disciples understood that Jesus knew all things. This seems to be a reference to the divine attribute of omniscience – namely that God knows all things. Only God knows all things and so this become an affirmation of their belief in the deity of Jesus – that Jesus is the Son of God; indeed God in the flesh (Psalm 139).

Second, the disciples understood that Jesus was sovereign – that there was really no one who could question Him and ask Him what He was doing as though He had no right. Jesus was and is Lord and as the all-knowing and sovereign Lord, by this the disciples said, **“we believe that You came from God”**

Now then, we know that their understanding was not complete. For if they truly understood who Jesus was, they would not have reacted as they did when Jesus was arrested and crucified; they would not have scattered and huddled in fear together in that upper room. This is why Jesus asked them, **“Do you now believe?”** “Do you now...this moment, believe as

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you ought to even without the promised Holy Spirit?” I believe Jesus interjected this dose of reality so that they would later remember that apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit, no one will believe in the Son of God as they ought.

All of this reminds me of an important truth Apart from the working of the Holy Spirit on the heart and mind of a person, it is impossible to know and believe aright in the Son of God. All humanity needs to know the Son of God and all the arguments and persuasive speech we can muster will not ever open the eyes of another to fullness of who Jesus is. This does not excuse us from using Scripture and pervasive speech to talk to people of their need for Jesus, but let us never forget that not even the disciples, under the glorious teaching of Jesus Himself, grasped the fullness of who Jesus was until after the Holy Spirit came. In other words, to know Jesus, to be resolved to know the Son of God requires not just information about Jesus, not simply a sharing of the Scriptures, but also a yeildedness, a willingness, a surrender to the Holy Spirit to make that information spiritually useful, truly effectual in our lives (turn to and read - 1 Corinthians 2:1-14).

Let us be resolved to know the Son of God – to know Jesus Christ; to invest ourselves in understanding Him through His word, but always knowing and always dependent upon the Spirit of God to make whatever “facts” about Jesus we may learn become “truths” that affect our souls, that change our lives, that enable us to live passionately for Jesus and to the glory of God.

6. Know the confidence of God (16:32)

Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

The sixth resolve I offer for your consideration is the resolve to know the confidence of God. What do I mean by the confidence of God? I mean that rather than looking to our depending upon ourselves, we are looking only to God for what it means to be loved, accepted, protected and cared for. Remember that I said the disciples both understood Jesus and yet didn't back from verse 31? When Jesus said, “**Do you now believe?**” there is a sense of sarcasm and irony. The NIV translates it this way, “You believe at last!” which again I take to imply a bit of sarcasm. Why do I say this? In just a few moments, the coming events surrounding Jesus' arrest and crucifixion would show that their faith was still weak. Jesus predicts that they would desert Him in His hour of testing. That hour was at hand and Jesus spoke of it as already happening because Judas was even then negotiating with the religious leaders for His arrest.

Now, if Jesus was finding His confidence, His hopes and His dreams in Judas, He would have been a fool. If Jesus had placed such confidence in His remaining eleven disciples, He again would be a fool, for they would scatter and leave Him alone. So then, where did Jesus find His confidence? Jesus' confidence was found in His Father comes and was expressed in His assurance in the fact that the Father would not desert Him even though the disciples would. Jesus knew the confidence of God and gave this gentle rebuke to the disciples because they had overestimated themselves. They had confidence in themselves and Jesus tells them that not even He depended upon Himself, but looked to the Father – for the Father was “with Him.”

Oh that we would be resolved to know such confidence; that we would resolve to not put our hopes and dreams in the hands and devices of men, but rather we would look to God. This confidence in God rather than in others or in self is spoken of clearly in Proverbs 3:5-7;

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5 Trust in the Lord (not in self; not in others) with all your heart (not just with your head, but with your heart – mind, will and emotions) and do not lean on your own understanding (which in comparison to the understanding of God is pathetic). 6 In all your ways (everything) acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight (smooth, simple, clear – not always easy). 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil (implying that confidence in self for anything is evil).

Will we be so resolved, so determined to place no confidence in ourselves, but by faith to look to the Father; knowing that in any circumstance, He is with the believer, and if God be for us, who can be against us?

7. Know the peace of God (16:33)

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.

The final resolution I would have you consider then flows right out of the resolve to know the confidence of God and that is to know the peace of God. Jesus expressly states His purpose for speaking all these things to His disciples. He says, “**so that in Me...**” (not in self; not in things, not in others but “in Me” alone) “**you may have peace.**” Beloved, the resolve to know the peace of God has been revealed in our previous resolves. For the one who knows the greatness of God; the intimacy of God; the love of God, the gospel of God; the Son of God and the confidence of God will by default know and live in the peace of God. The word for “peace” refers to rest, contentment and tranquility. We see a picture of this in the wonderful words of the 23rd Psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want (be in any need or concern). 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures (a sheep will not lie down unless it is confident that it is secure); He leads me beside quiet waters (waters of peace; rest; contentment).

The word peace also means “to be at one with; to be joined together.” There is a picture of reconciliation; bringing to parties together who had formally been engaged in hostilities. What is the opposite of war; the opposite of two parties fighting each other? It is peace; of two parties coming together to live with and enjoy one another. Jesus as spoken all these words so that in Him; being joined to Him even as a branch to the vine; we might have peace; Jesus tells His disciples that the only path to peace; to this contentment and rest is by being “in Him.” Remember in John 14:27 Jesus calls it “My peace.” The confidence and rest Jesus had in the face of His trial and tribulation which consisted of being abandoned by His friends, the public humiliation of a trial, a beating and crucifixion; that even in these He had peace; He at rest because He had confidence in God the Father, that all these things would work to the glory of the Father.

And notice that Jesus doesn't end there. He doesn't just say, “Because I have peace and contentment in the midst of my hardships you may have peace.” What does He add... “**In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.**” Jesus says in

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effect, “You will experience similar things that I have. You will be hated because of Me, you will be persecuted; you will have hardships; but will you be resolved in the midst of such things to know the peace of God; My peace.

Beloved, I have no idea what is in store for 2009. If it is a typical year, it will be filled with both triumphs and trials. We will have births and we will have deaths. We will have successes and we will have setbacks. But whatever is to come, will you be resolved that every decision and every direction of your life will be subject to the overarching goal of bringing glory to God? The resolve to know the peace of God, the contentment of Jesus even in the midst of hardships comes with a price tag. The world will test your resolve to be content in Jesus. So are you resolved to know now that before a crown in heaven, you must pick up your cross on earth? That before you enjoy the success of Spirit working in you, you must first sacrifice yourself? That before you receive the reward of glory, you must first experience the reproach of the world? To the unbelieving ear this sounds like fruitless labor; a foolish endeavor; an exercise in futility. But to the ear resolved to glorify God; to the ear attuned to the affections of God; there is no peace; there is no confidence; there is no rightly knowing the Son of God; of knowing the gospel; of knowing the love, the intimacy and the greatness of God. Such things are found only as one passionately pursues the holiness and uniqueness of Jesus in his or her life. Will this be your resolve? Will this be your endeavor for 2009? Will it be pointless? Will it be without hope? Of course not, for Jesus says at the end of John 16:33, **“but take courage (take heart), I have overcome (I have victory over) the world.”**

Soli Deo Gloria

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