

Ten Commitments for the New Year

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[0:00] It's been a good day, hasn't it?

For a number of reasons. First of all, an opportunity to worship the Lord. And we had a great time of worship this morning. And tonight as well an opportunity to continue that.

And we've been worshiping Him and looking into His Word. And we're going to be doing that tonight. And a great day in God's faithfulness.

God's faithfulness. And, well, it's just been a great day. Great holiday. Great Christmas time. And I already said this morning how good it was for me.

And I'm sure it was for you. In fact, we still have some family members lingering around after the holidays. And it's always good to have family coming.

[1:05] I want you to take your Bibles tonight and look, if you will, at Proverbs chapter 3. Proverbs chapter 3. And a little bit later here, after a bit of introduction, I'm going to read the entire third chapter of Proverbs.

Proverbs chapter 3. It's 34 verses, I think, in all. Somewhere thereabouts. And we'll read that here in just a minute. But I want you to be honest with me to begin with.

I mean, this is just a couple days before the new year. And, you know, this is a good time to be talking about that dreaded word, resolutions. I say dreaded because, well, it just has kind of taken on that connotation because we're such miserable failures at it.

And I say we, you're probably thinking, well, Pastor, you have a frog in your pocket, I guess. But I think that's all of us. We have troubles with resolutions. And I do want to address that issue tonight. I want to begin by asking you a question. I want you to be honest with me. Last year, about this time, you made some commitments, I'll bet you.

[2:15] Nearly every one of you. And about this time last year, you were saying, you know, this year, which was last year, this year, some things are just going to be different.

I'm just going to change some things. I'm going to change some things in my life. I'm going to stop this, start this. Spend more time, you know, reading God's word, praying to God, serving the Lord and His church.

I'm going to be a better spouse, husband, wife, better parents, spend more time with my family. And on and on and on. We could make the list.

And so this time, about this time of the year, last year, we were saying this, thinking this. Our thought processes were moving that way. You know, it's just almost kind of natural for us now.

We get close to the new year, whether it's just before it or just after it begins. And right off, we have this. We're just compelled to make some commitments, which is a good thing.

[3:17] Nothing wrong with that. All right. So having said that, with just a simple show of hands, who here among us has stuck to the New Year's resolutions you made last year about this time?

Just raise your hand. Got one. Two. Two. Two. What happened to the rest of us? Huh? Either you didn't make any because you just are opposed to it, you know.

Which might be problematic, if you think about it, because all of us need to make commitments. But not just at that time of the year, of course. I'll give you that. And so, you know, how did things go? Well, maybe not so well. You know, someone has said that you know what they say about New Year's resolutions. They usually go in one year and out the other. I'm really proud of you that you got that.

I read it a couple times before I got it. You know. There was a poll or survey taken not too long ago. And someone, on the basis of the survey, has come up with the top five most popular resolutions.

[4:32] Top five. You could probably guess them. I'll start with number five. The fifth most popular resolution was to take on a new hobby. Would you have guessed that?

That was number five most popular. Take on a new hobby. Maybe that's an idea for some of you who want to take on a new hobby this year. Number four was make more money. Well, how pitiful. Number three was improve relationships. Now we're getting to some important things here. Number three, most popular New Year's resolution, make or rather improve relationships.

Number two, stop smoking. That was just from a general survey, okay? Now, probably not going to be one of your resolutions.

I hope not. That is, unless you're a smoker, then it would be a good one to make. That was number two. Stop smoking. And then the most popular New Year's resolution, guess what it was?

[5:34] Lose weight. Exactly. In fact, I heard a story about a woman who walked into her bathroom and found her husband standing on the bathroom scales, weighing himself and sucking in his stomach.

And immediately the thought came to her, he thinks sucking in his stomach is going to make him lose weight or weigh less. And so she very sarcastically said, honey, that won't work.

And he said, sure it will. That's the only way I can see the numbers, you know. I'll throw in a few little jokes here. But now seriously, this time of year, we often make personal commitments.

Let's just use that term instead of resolutions, though there's nothing wrong with the word resolutions. You're resolved to do a certain thing. So let's call it personal commitments. And so this time of the year, unless you, like a few, have expressed here, you are opposed to that whole notion this time of the year, and so you resist that thing.

But most of us, I think, still, even if it's privately, make some personal commitments. And yet, how quickly we forget about them. Unless, of course, it is the same one every single year.

[6:53] And that is a poor testimony. But primarily, we make the resolutions about the year, and then we forget all about them. Not necessarily forget the need to make some of these changes, but we forget all about the resolution, that we made a resolution, that we made a commitment either to ourselves, or maybe we even made it with God, to God, or to family members.

And so by mid-January, oftentimes, we have forgotten all about it. I heard about a man who moved into a retirement community and planned to spend the rest of his life there, and enjoyed it there.

Met a lot of people. Made a lot of friends. In fact, he met one lady there that he was attracted to, and she was attracted to him. And so they began to spend a lot of time together, and eventually he proposed to her, asked her to marry him.

And the next morning, he woke up thinking, I remember making the proposal, but I can't remember if she said yes or no. And so that morning, he sought her out and said, I am so embarrassed, but I proposed to you last night, but can't remember what you said.

I can't remember if you said yes or no. And she said, oh, thank goodness. I'm so glad that you came to me, because I remember saying yes, but I can't remember who made the proposal. All right, that's just a little story about forgetfulness, okay?

[8:23] To fortify the idea, all right? The problem. We're going to make a personal commitment. We need to stick to it. We need to remember that we made it.

And so we need something to help our memory. And not only that, not only do we need something to help us remember our personal commitments, but we need also something to advise us on those commitments, on the appropriate commitments or resolutions to make.

And what better place to go than God's word? And so we want to get a little help from one of the wisest men who ever lived. That would be Solomon. And so we're going to get some help from the Proverbs.

The Proverbs. And so Proverbs chapter 3, and I'm going to read the entire Proverb all the way to verse 35, actually.

I'm so sorry. I forgot there were 35 verses. Read the entire Psalm and Proverb, rather. And in this Proverb, this chapter of Proverbs, we're going to discover 10 worthy resolutions to make.

[9:43] 10 worthy resolutions. Let me read the Proverb. My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commandments.

For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you. Let not mercy and truth forsake you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart.

And so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh and strength to your bones. Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increase.

So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction.

[10 : 47] For whom the Lord loves, He corrects just as a father, the son in whom He delights. Happy is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding.

For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver. And her gain then finds fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.

Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her.

The Lord by wisdom founded the earth. By understanding He established the heavens. By His knowledge the depths were broken up, and the clouds dropped down the dew.

My son, let them not depart from your eyes. Keep sound wisdom and discretion, so they will be life to your soul, and grace to your neck.

[11 : 52] Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid. Yes, you will lie down, and your sleep will be sweet.

Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes. For the Lord will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught. Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so.

Do not say to your neighbor, Go and come back, and tomorrow I will give it when you have it with you. Do not devise evil against your neighbor, for he dwells by you for safety's sake.

Do not strive with a man without a cause, if he has done you no harm. Do not envy the oppressor, and choose none of his ways, for the perverse person is an abomination to the Lord, but his secret counsel is with the upright.

The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the just. Surely he scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble.

[13 : 02] The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be a legacy of fools. There is the proverb, Proverb chapter 3. And what I want us to see here, are ten, I think, ten worthy resolutions, or personal commitments, that you could make, that we could and should make, for this year and any year.

Ten of them. All right, here it is. Resolution number one. I will. And that's what a resolution is. I am resolved to do a certain thing.

I will prioritize my life according to God's word. Now, is that a worthy resolution to make? Of course. Of course.

Of course. Is it one we need to remember? Surely. Is it one that we need to revisit constantly throughout the year? Absolutely.

Or we'll lose sight of it. Or lose sight of our commitment to it. And here it is again. I will prioritize my life according to God's word.

[14 : 16] We find that in verses 1 through 4. Look at it. My son, he said, do not forget my law. Now, don't get hung up on the word law. Right off, you're thinking about the Ten Commandments.

But the word law, of course, means something much larger than just the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. It is a word that signifies the whole of God's word.

Your law. Let me not forget your law. But let your heart keep my commands. Keep them. Don't misunderstand the word keep.

We're not just simply keeping them like we would put them underneath our pillow or put them in a safe place in our house so no one would steal them or someplace where we remember and so we would not lose them.

We're talking about obeying them. obeying them. Incorporating God's law, God's word into our lives. Let not mercy.

[15 : 22] Well, I skipped over verse 2. Verse 2 is a promise. For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you. What will add these things?

God's word. God's word. Let not mercy and truth forsake you. Verse 3. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart.

And here again is an additional promise. And so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man. But the focus there, the key there, is the priority of life.

And the priority of life is God's word. And so I'm going to, this is what I'm going to do this year.

Alright? And you should say the same. In fact, we could stand up and put our right hand on the Bible and say, I will, I will prioritize my life according to God's word.

According to God's word. Now how would God, God's word prioritize your life? Well, get into it and find out. But we could, I think, safely make some generalizations.

[16 : 34] I'll give you five of them. Worship. That's a priority. And contained within that very broad term, worship, would be certainly our corporate worship.

But that's only a part of it. But it is something to commit to. That we not forsake this assembly. That when Highland Park Baptist Church, that body of baptized believers and followers of Christ and servers and worshipers of Christ, when they assemble, I'm not going to forsake that assembly. The corporate worship is extremely important. But that, of course, is just part of it. Our worship encompasses everything. Everything. Everything in our lives.

Everything we do. Whether in private or in public. Whether it's some of the mundane things in life.

Or some of those things that are maybe, have a little bit more weighty.

As far as value. Everything is a part of our worship. Our worship. So worship is a good priority.

Fellowship. How about that one? Fellowship. Fellowship, I say, specifically in the context of that local body of believers.

[17 : 54] The family. This family called Highland Park Baptist Church. Fellowship. And that includes unity and love and working with one another and serving one another and meeting one another's needs in the name of Jesus.

Fellowship. Worship. Fellowship. These are good priorities. It comes straight from God's Word. I'm going to let God's Word prioritize my life. You see. Worship. Fellowship. Discipleship.

These are just some broad categories and they're pretty easy to pick out. In fact, you could come up with these on your own. Worship. Fellowship. Discipleship. And that includes personal discipleship.

Commitments to personal discipleship. That would take place not only in the context or the confines of this building. Sunday school and other opportunities for discipleship.

But also your own private discipleship. Where you become a studier of God's Word. Not just a reader of it. Now, I'm all for those who want to make a commitment to reading through the Bible in one year.

[19 : 00] In fact, quite often, this is the time of the year when people make that commitment. They'll get out one of those guides. You know? Or maybe it's even a Bible that you can buy. A devotional Bible that will help you, guide you, organize your reading so that you can read through the entire Bible in one year.

If you want to do that and commit to that, go right ahead. But be careful that you don't just become a reader of God's Word rather than a studier of God's Word. And if you can only take on two or three verses and really study it in depth, then that's all you should do in a day's time.

So be a studier of God's Word. A personal discipleship we should all commit to. That's how God's Word would prioritize our life. Worship and fellowship and discipleship and ministry.

Where we give of ourselves in serving, in ministry. Not only to those within our fellowship, this assembly, but beyond, of course, the assembly called Highland Park Baptist Church.

Where we minister to others in the name of Jesus Christ. We need to be involved in that. That's a good priority. And missions would be the fifth one that I would give. And I'm not giving these in order of importance.

[20 : 16] These are all priorities. Okay? We're to commit ourselves, I think, to all five of these. Again, broad categories.

Missions. That is where we are involved directly, certainly. Also indirectly. Also indirectly. In the proclamation of the gospel.

The good news of Jesus Christ. To our world. Bartlesville and our world. These are priorities. So that's resolution number one.

I will prioritize my life according to God's Word. It's a no-brainer. It's what we all ought to be doing every single day. But there are times, and this might be a good time, to make a re-commitment, a fresh commitment, to something that God has already demanded of us.

Prioritize my life according to God's Word. Here's resolution number two. I will rely completely upon God's wisdom and power for everything in my life.

[21 : 30] Now, that's a pretty broad commitment, isn't it? That's to include everything. Even those things that you have to date not yet turned over to Him.

You say, well, I don't have anything like that. Liar. We all have some areas in our life that we keep for ourselves.

Things that are our pet worries. We'll turn everything over to Him except those things. Maybe even we could call our pet sins that we're still struggling with and we've not really dealt with scripturally. Certain decisions in life. And there's just not time tonight to list all the possibilities that would come under this resolution. And so let's just say it again generally.

I will rely completely upon God's wisdom and power for everything, everything in my life. Proverbs 5 and 6, verses 5 and 6.

[22 : 40] Proverbs 3, 5 and 6. It's one of the first verses of Scripture I memorized as a child. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. That's the King James because that's how I memorized it.

Or the version I memorized. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not to thine own understanding, but in all thy ways.

What? Acknowledge Him. I mean, you catch how absolute this is. You catch in the language here how all conclusive this is.

This is a great resolution. One that I've made many times. Many times.

And not just at the beginning of a new year. This is a life verse. Or ought to be. Trust in the Lord. Here's the definition of trust.

[23 : 43] A firm belief in or confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability, and justice of another person.

Though in this case, of course, it's God. He said that again. A firm belief, firm confidence, absolute confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability, and justice of God.

For everything. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. All your heart.

That means everything. Lean not. Don't trust in your own understanding of things. Your own wisdom.

See, we're committing to rely upon God's wisdom. Don't rely on your own understanding in all your ways.

[24 : 46] In all your ways. In everything you do. Everywhere you go. Every decision to make. Every step you take. Acknowledge Him. And then the promise.

What's the promise? He shall direct your path. Literally make your path straight. And that's a good thing. A straight path. Resolution number three.

I will obey God's Word and not be ruled by my own self-appraised wisdom. I'll say this again. Not be ruled by my own self-appraised wisdom and fleshly desires.

I will obey God's Word and not be ruled by my own self-appraised wisdom. Self-estimated wisdom. You're free to use whatever word there. And fleshly desires. Self-appraised wisdom and fleshly desires. Verses 7 and 8 here in the Psalm of the third chapter.

[25 : 50] Do not be wise in your own eyes. That's a self-appraised wisdom. Fear the Lord and depart from evil.

And here's the promise. It will be health to your flesh and strength to your bones. That's a resolution.

I will obey God's Word and not be ruled, guided, ruled by my own self-estimated wisdom, self-appraised wisdom and fleshly desires.

We have both those problems. See, those are two things. What I consider to be wise in my own estimation and not to be ruled by the cravings of my flesh.

Something that we deal with every moment of our lives. We are confronted by that and tempted by that.

[27 : 02] Allured away from God and devotion to Him. By that? By what? Our cravings. The cravings of the flesh. That fallen part of us.

That unredeemed part of us. The flesh. And so here's the priority or the resolution. I'll obey God's Word. Same as saying, I'm going to obey God.

I'm going to follow God. I'm going to be led by God. I'm going to choose His wisdom. And not be ruled by my own self-appraised wisdom and fleshly desires.

Resolution number four. I will honor the Lord with all my possessions. All of them. Verses 9 and 10. Honor the Lord with your possessions. Very straightforward, that is. I didn't have to think long and hard about how to articulate this resolution. It's right there in verse 9.

[28:02] Honor the Lord with your possessions. And with the firstfruits of all your increase. That is all that God blesses you with. Not or, but and.

By the way. So it's not just enough to, you know, give a little bit out of the, you know, the cream that comes to the top.

To give the firstfruits of that. That's required. But he says, honor the Lord with your possessions. That is literally all. The implication, all your possessions.

And with the firstfruits of your increase. And here's the promise. So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. Now, I don't have a barn. I don't have vats. But we understand the symbolism here, don't we? What the analogy is. And what does this include? Well, it includes tithing, for sure. Tithing.

[29:03] What is tithing? What does the word tithe mean? Amen. You all knew it.

You were just afraid to say it. You know, you're just afraid. Well, maybe, you know, there's some doubt in my mind whether that's correct. It's a tenth. That's what the word means. A tenth. A tenth of what? Everything God gives you.

A tenth. And I call your attention to the word firstfruits. It's not the last tenth. It's the first one. That means God gets the first tenth before anybody else gets what you have.

Now, do the math. That means He gets more than maybe some are giving Him. We don't give Him some of what's left. We give Him a tenth of the whole. That's a good lesson on tithing.

And that's not what I intended to do tonight. But this resolution, I will honor the Lord with all my possessions, includes tithing. But more than that, it includes what the Bible calls offerings.

[30:15] Tithes and offerings. And I take that to refer to above the tithe. The tithe goes to the church.

To the, quote, storehouse. I know there are differences of opinion about that from Scripture. But I think it's pretty clear. The principle is that the tenth is undesignated.

I mean, you don't say, well, I'm going to give my tenth and I'm going to give it this time to this. Or this time to that. Or maybe a half of it to this.

And then a half of it to the church. No, it should all be undesignated. Did you know that? The offerings are given to designated things.

Whatever God says, give it to. And these offerings are not just to the church. They may be to some other ministry. Dear people, don't ever give your tithe to anything or anyone other than this church.

[31:27] This is the storehouse. But the offerings, as God directs you, God blesses you, you give it to whomever and whatever God so directs.

It could be to some of the many parachurch ministries that are out there. Make sure you're giving to the right thing.

And that it be used for the right thing. But these are offerings. And so we're to honor. This is what we're going to do. This is our resolution. Honor the Lord with all our possession. It includes tithing and offerings.

And I think also, and this might be included under offerings, but giving to someone in need. Maybe it's on the spur of a moment. And you know of a need within the body of Christ.

Maybe no one else knows it but you. And you know there's a need. And God has said, I want you to meet that need. And we say, yes, Lord.

[32:28] Everything I have is yours. All of it. Not just the tent. Everything is yours, God. If you want me to give it to so and so who is struggling and has a need, then I will do it.

We're honoring with all of our possessions. Let me read a passage from 2 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 6 and following. And I'm going to read it from the Phillips translation.

I like the way he kind of expands upon this passage. Poor sowing, you might just want to listen because it's not going to really fit very well with any translation in here.

Unless you, of course, have the Phillips, J.B. Phillips translation. Anybody have the J.B. Phillips translation with him? Probably not. You might have it on your phone or Kindle or something like that.

Let me read it to you. Poor sowing means a poor harvest. Generous sowing means a generous harvest. Let everyone give as his heart tells him.

[33:33] Neither grudgingly nor under compulsion. For God loves the man who gives cheerfully. After all, God can give you everything that you need so that you may always have sufficient both for yourselves and for giving away to other people.

As the Scripture says, he has dispersed abroad. He has given to the poor. His righteousness remains forever. Verse 10. And he who gives the seed to the sower and turns that seed into bread to eat will give you the seed of generosity to sow and for harvest the satisfying bread of good deeds well done.

The more you are enriched by God, the more scope there will be for generous giving. That means the more God blesses you, the more you'll have to give. And your gifts administered through us will mean that many will thank God.

For your giving does not end in meeting the wants of your fellow Christians. It also results in an overflowing tide of thanksgiving to God. Moreover, your very giving proves the reality of your faith. And that means that men thank God that you practice the gospel that you profess to believe in. As well as for the actual gifts you make to them and to others.

[34:55] And yet further, men will pray for you and feel drawn to you because you have obviously received a generous measure of the grace of God. Thank God then for his indescribable generosity to you.

It's a really wonderful passage. So, resolution number four. I will honor the Lord with all my possession. Resolution number five. I will be teachable. That we really ought to stand up and say, I will be teachable.

I will be teachable. Verses 11 and 12. My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest his correction. And again, here's the promise.

For whom the Lord loves, he chastens, he corrects, just as a father, the son in whom he delights. Now, you might be thinking, well, what does this have to do with teachable?

Well, that's what it's all about. God is teaching us. Do you think God just wants to spank us, you know, when we do something wrong or say something wrong or disobey him?

[35:59] Like he's some grandfather type character sitting up there and he's just always saying, naughty, naughty. I'm going to have to spank you for that. This is much more than just punishment.

I think it's included in that. Loving correction is a part of this. But there's more than that. Not only does God correct us so that he would rather, not only does he correct us in the sense of punishing us for our sin, he also corrects us to protect us.

God protects us. And most of the time, we don't even know it. That God allows a certain hard thing to come into our lives, some obstacle, some barrier, some point of difficulty, maybe it's even some point of suffering, and we complain to God about that and not knowing that God is protecting us from something far worse.

He also does it to perfect us. In fact, I would say that that is the ultimate end of it all. To perfect us. To make us more like his son, Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus. Correction, protection, perfection, whatever the goal, the ultimate end of it.

[37:23] We're not to despise it. And all of it, I think, comes under this idea of being teachable. God, I will be teachable this year. God, I will be teaching you.

God, I will be teaching you. Whether it is, you know, from a parent, someone in my church, an elder, in the sense of older and wiser, a counselor that you send into my life, my own personal study and prayer, as I read your word, that I would have a teachable spirit, as you allow things to come into my life, that I would have eyes open and heart open, to be looking for your hand in those things, so that my life would be changed, so that I would be perfected, whether it's this knucklehead that stands up here behind the pulpit every Sunday and preaches God's word, I want a teachable spirit. I will be teachable this year. That's a good resolution. Resolution number six. We surely need to move on. I will seek divine wisdom and understanding through the diligent study of God's word. I will seek divine wisdom and understanding through the diligent study of God's word. Verses 13 through 24. And let me just cut to the chase.

Well, verse 13, happy is the man who finds what? Wisdom. And the man who gains what? Understanding, I think, in most translations.

[39:06] Wisdom and understanding. Or knowledge. Or the understanding of knowledge. Wisdom is Sophia. There she is right back there.

She's looking at me. Did you call my name? Did you call my name? Yes. You know it. You've been told, haven't you? You've been taught that. All right. So where to find wisdom and understanding? Blessed is the man. Happy is the man who finds wisdom and understanding. For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver. What is better than the profits of silver? Who is she? Sophia. Wisdom and understanding. And her gain than fine gold. More precious than rubies. And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. And he goes on to list the wonderful characteristics of wisdom and understanding.

And then he says in verse 21, Well, my son, let them, wisdom and understanding, not depart from your eyes. That is, continue to gaze upon them. And how is it that we gaze upon them?

[40:11] Isn't that something we can look for? Well, there it is right over there. You know, there's wisdom. It's right here. Let not your eyes depart from it.

Wisdom and understanding. Keep sound wisdom and discretion. So they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck. An idiom.

It's blessing. Then you will walk safely in your way and your foot will not stumble. And when you lie down, you will not be afraid. Not be gripped by fear.

Not fear tomorrow. Yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. Sweet sleep. Boy. That's a wonderful promise.

See, here's the resolution. I will seek, always be seeking divine wisdom. Not my own wisdom. Not man's wisdom. Not the world's wisdom. But divine wisdom and understanding, the application of that wisdom, through the diligent study of God's Word.

[41:17] Resolution number seven. I will walk by faith and place my confidence in the power of God. I will walk by faith and place my confidence in the power of God.

In fact, that's really somewhat saying the same thing twice. Walking by faith is placing your confidence in the power of God. Verse 25 and 26.

Do not be afraid of sudden terror. And just don't live in fear. The fear of the unknown. Fear of something happening. Something bad happening. Some sudden terror.

Don't be fearful of that. Nor be troubled. Nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes. And here's the promise. For the Lord will be your confidence. That's a great statement.

The Lord will be your confidence. And will keep your foot from being caught. Paul encouraged young Timothy in 2 Timothy 1.7.

[42:23] And you know this verse. For God has not given us a spirit of fear. But of power and love and of a sound mind.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Nor of me, His prisoner. But share with me in the sufferings for the gospel. According to the power of God. Resolution number eight.

I will be always ready to show compassion for those who are in genuine need. Now this is a hard one for some of us.

I think there are within the church those who have been given the gift of mercy. And God has so gifted certain ones within the body of Christ to always be ready.

Always be ready to meet needs. Genuine needs of people. But that does not just because you might think, I don't have that gift.

[43:26] You know, it's pretty easy to say, I don't have the gift of mercy. Get away from me. Or go ask somebody else. No, we can't do that. We have a certain measure of responsibility to also have mercy.

And we are to always be ready. It's a good resolution. Lord, this year. And for some of us here, this is an important resolution. For some of you, you don't need this one.

Because you just are that sort. You're just always ready to help people. But the majority of us are not. And we need to be resolved. That this year I will always be ready to show compassion for those who are in genuine need.

Verse 27 and 28. Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due. That is, those who need it. Really need it. When it is in the power of your hand to do so.

Now, there are certain things that you may be made aware of that you don't have the resources to do. To help, to meet. But if you have the power in your hand to do so, then do not withhold it.

[44:31] From those who really do need it. Do not say to your neighbor, go and come back and tomorrow I will give it. When you have it with you.

Translation, give it then. Give it then. It's not enough to say, you know, if you need anything, just give me a call. How many times have you said that or something similar and then within a week or so that that person did call you?

It hardly ever happens. And we know that. And that's why it's easy to make that kind of commitment. If you need anything, just anything, just give me a call. Whatever you need. And then when they do call, we're kind of, well, I don't know if I really meant that.

So here's the resolution. I will always be always ready to show compassion for those who are in genuine need. Resolution number nine. I will seek to be at peace with all people.

These are some high-powered resolutions, people. These are much harder than I'm going to lose weight this year. You may think that that's too hard for you, but these are much harder.

[45 : 41] And these require the grace of God. For most of us, to lose weight would require an act of God. But these are difficult.

I will seek to be at peace with all people, all of them, even the ones I don't really like. Verses 29 and 30.

Do not devise evil against your neighbor. And this is an interesting statement. For he, that is your neighbor, dwells by you. He is your neighbor for safety's sake.

It means you have a responsibility. You say, well, my neighbor's not my responsibility. He's got his thing. I've got my thing. I take care of my own. He takes care of his own. No, your neighbor's, God has designed it for safety's sake.

And yet the problem is in our culture we have refused the principle of being a good neighbor. Now, at one time in our country, that was not the case. You know, it was more common for a man to give his shirt off his back for his neighbor.

[46 : 50] Today, we live in our own little compounds and we don't venture out. And we may not even know who our neighbors are. And if they had a death in the family, the only way we would know it is if a pile of cars were out in front of the house.

And even then we might not even suspect it. Nor do we care. Nor do we care. Usually. Now, I know I'm being very general. Maybe I'm not. It doesn't apply to you. Do not strive with a man without cause if he has done you no harm.

Paul expanded upon this principle in Romans 12, 14. Listen to it. Bless those who persecute you.

Bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice.

Weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends upon you, live peaceably with all men.

[47 : 56] I mean, some people just won't have it. But if they won't have the peace, let it not be your fault. If it's possible, as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all men.

Not just all people in your church. People you work with. And people out there. And so forth.

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath.

For it is written, vengeance is mine. By the way, not your wrath, but God's wrath. Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy is hungry, do what?

Feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in so doing, you will heap coals of fire on his head.

Now, that sounds very devious, very wicked, but it's not at all. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. With good. So, here's the resolution.

[48 : 56] Resolution number nine. I will seek to be at peace with all people. All people. Resolution number ten. Final one. I will not.

I will stop. Excuse me. I will stop idolizing the wicked. This seems a little bit strange in light of all the others. But listen to what the proverb says.

Do not envy the oppressor and choose none of his ways. For the perverse person is an abomination to the Lord, but his secret counsel is with the upright.

The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the just. Surely he scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble. The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools.

Now, you say, what does this have to do with the resolution? I will stop idolizing the wicked. We have this really twisted, devilish.

[50 : 03] And I say we, I mean we Christians. Have this kind of devilish fixation for Hollywood actors.

Fixation. Or characters in movies. We idolize men and women who are wicked, perverse. Not just Christless, but perverse. It used to be that, you know, in maybe 40, 50 years ago, we could watch a Hollywood movie and not know anything about the private lives of the actors and actresses. And now, you know, I just get really irritated. I'm watching, you know, some classic movie on what is Turner's, whatever it is.

Huh? TCM. TMC. TCM. And, doggone it, after the movie's over and I've just loved that movie, and then this guy tells me about the perversion of one of the actors or actresses, their homosexuality or something.

[51 : 24] I don't want to know that. And I'm kind of being silly here. But the point is this. We've got to stop idolizing and being drawn to and admiring people in our culture who are perverse to the core.

We're not to have any of their ways. Our young people are not only idolizing them, but trying to imitate them.

And we've got to stop that. You see, the secret counsel, the counsel of God is with the upright. Those who live in righteousness, according to God's word, the curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked.

We're not to number ourselves with them. He gives grace to the humble. The wise are the ones who inherit glory. The shame.

Shame is the legacy of fools. And we're not to number ourselves with them. Associate ourselves with them. Alright? Ten worthy resolutions.

[52 : 45] Thank you.