

New Beginnings

Resolve: Psalm 78



WEST SOUND COMMUNITY CHURCH

WINTER 2020

"January 3rd, 2021...the first Sunday after 2020...it's time for those New Year's Resolutions. Oh, brother, is it ever."

Or...is it? Is it really different than any other Sunday? In fact, does the turning of a calendar page represent anything other than, well, just that... "the turning of a page?" It depends, I believe, upon **resolve**. As a verb, the word means: to deal with successfully, to clear things up, to solve doubts or disputes, to find answers, to make clear and understandable. As a noun, it means: faithful in purpose, determination, conviction. The Bible brings it up all the time. It may use different words in different settings, but trust me, resolve is a major and recurring theme within God's truth...

I have kept the faith.

Fight the good fight of faith.

Lay hold on eternal life.

My only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.

I can do all things through Christ.

The LORD is for me, so I will have no fear.

When I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness

Do not let your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me.

For in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Be not weary in well doing.

So we make it our goal to please him.

I delight to do your will.

Colossians 1:10-11 alone is completely packed with resolve: "...live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience."

1Corinthians 9:24-27 gives it to us through an athletic analogy: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

In Luke 21: 34-36, near the end of his three year ministry, Jesus said, "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."



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New Beginnings: Resolve

Resolutions, for followers of Jesus, are not meant to be constantly revisited, re-stated, or even added to...they are firm and already established. Have been. Still are. Always will be.

The real issue is not about new resolutions, but between fighting the good fight or fleeing the field of combat.

The former is right and good. It abides in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
The latter is not right. It's not good. It abides not in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The former is the biblical norm...the desired resolve.
The latter is the aberration...the shocking, surprising, dismissal of faith and trust in the Lord.

Both the victories and the retreats are recorded in both the Old and New Testaments. Both were choices made by individuals, Israel, and the Church, but make no mistake...the former is the Lord's norm, the latter is not.

We see this contrast vividly condensed in Psalm 78. Beginning in verse nine, the writer bounces back and forth between the failures of God's people and the consistency of God in his justice, grace, and mercy.

1st Beginning with verse nine, the exact opposite of resolve is lamented by exposing the failures of God's people...

"The Ephraimites, armed with the bow, turned back on the day of battle. They did not keep God's covenant, but refused to walk according to his law. They forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them."

Examples of Their Failed Resolve	Examples of His Complete Resolve
Vs. 11 They forgot his works	Vs. 13 He parted the sea
Vs. 17 They sinned still more against him	Vs. 14 He led them with a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night
Vs. 18 They tested God in their heart	Vs. 24 He delivered manna from heaven
Vs. 32 In spite of all God's goodness and help, they continued in sin	Vs. 38 He atoned for their sin

Read Psalm 78.
Find all the examples.

2nd Returning to verses one through eight, what does the Lord tell us to do about this apparently consistent aberration?

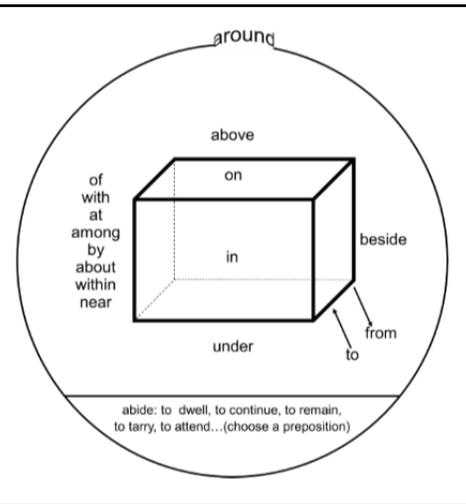
A. Psalm 78:1-3: We must stay the course in our resolve for God and his word.

In fact, you can choose your preposition, so long as it's one of those that agrees with rather than opposes the object—God and his word. You should always be around, on, in, under, beside, of, with, at, among, by, about, within, and near the Lord and his word.

This is the point of verses 1 through 3:

- Give ear...to my law
Incline your ears...to my words
- I will open my mouth in a *parable*
I will utter *dark sayings* from of old,
things that we have heard and known
that our fathers have told us.

As the Father
has loved me,
so have I loved you.
Abide in my love.
John 15:9



B. Psalm 78:4-8: We must pass on our resolve for God and his word to each new generation.

It is not enough to be good. It is not enough to let our actions speak for us. It's simply not always true that more is caught than taught. Words matter, because God's Word matters. This is the point of verses 4 through 8:

- We will not hide them from their children, but *tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD*, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.
- He *established a testimony* in Jacob and *appointed a law* in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,
- so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and *that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation*, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.