

Resolutions for the soul

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2023

Preacher: Henry Dyck

[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone, and a happy new year. It seems like only a week ago I was saying Merry Christmas to everyone. Time goes fast.

Let's start off this morning with our insert in the bulletin. I put together a little bit of a list here, just a little bit of a review of what we have done as a church or what has gone on in our church in 2022.

So just a quick glimpse back over the past year. And so let's start with that. We've got a list of babies to start off with.

We've had six girls and five boys born into our congregation here over this past year. So the church, the future church is continuing to grow.

That is good to see. And there were seven baptisms as well. We had one on May 29th and one on October 9th.

[1 : 0 8] And so we had seven candidates be baptized. And then as well, five weddings. So five new unions here as well over the past year.

New family is starting. And then as for preaching, over the past year, we've been looking. Pastor Wayne was going through the book of Hebrews.

We finished that earlier in the year, the start of summer or so. And then when Pastor Peter and myself came on board, we started off in the book of Romans.

And so we're still continuing to do that. We haven't finished yet. But just kind of a review on what we've been teaching through the past year. And then I also put in just some interesting stats there on Sunday school and VBS.

So just an average attendance for Sunday school over the past year has been around 73 students. So 73 children coming to Sunday school on any given Sunday on average.

[2 : 2 0] And then for VBS, the theme this year we had. And the average attendance there was 125 students most days.

So almost double what came to Sunday school on the average Sunday. So we see a good outreach there.

So just an encouragement with that. So just a few things that kind of reflect back on from over the past year. And as we're on the calendar date of January 1st, we now change our focus from looking back to what the past year has been for us.

Now we look forward to the new year. And where are we going as a church? What lies ahead for us?

What are our goals for this year? So at being New Year, how many of us make New Year's resolutions?

[3 : 3 0] Maybe some of us do. And then I guess the next question then would be, if we're a solution, how many of us keep them throughout the year?

I was doing a little bit of research into this. And right away it came up that the majority of people fail to keep resolutions.

And often it only takes a few weeks for that to fail. Some of the headlines were, most New Year's resolutions fail, will fail in six weeks. Here's how to keep them.

Or stick to the plan. You can keep your New Year's resolutions if you do so and so. And then there's always tips on how to keep New Year's resolutions.

So it's a struggle to keep them. Some reasons that they fail, well, we set unrealistic goals. Or maybe those goals just aren't quite specific enough.

[4 : 31] Or there's a lack of planning there. They're easily forgotten. Or maybe it's a lack of motivation. You know, we set resolutions because the friends around us, people around us do it.

And, oh, I should do that too, right? And so there's little motivation there, really. And so when daily life comes along, then those things go by the wayside.

So some of the common themes over many years already, resolutions that people make. Number one on the list most often is to improve health or fitness.

And then followed by improving finances, the financial situations. And then to maybe to learn new skills or learn new things or improve on things that we know.

God gives us some resolutions as well. He has resolutions that I think He would like us to make as well. In our text here, it lays out two specific resolutions, things for us to do.

[5 : 41] And in a sense, they kind of parallel the resolutions that the world makes, some of the top resolutions. And so the resolutions here in our text, two we'll look at, is to work out your own salvation and do all things without complaining and disputing.

And so I've titled today's message, Resolutions for the Soul. Let's look back in Philippians 2.

Look at verses 12 and 13 to begin with. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. So the whole idea behind resolutions is a desire to change things about ourselves that we don't like.

You know, our image or maybe habits that we have. Or to improve on something that we know. To improve on our skills.

[7 : 04] To become better at things. And so the first resolution in our text here sounds a little similar to the one that the world makes.

Being improving health and fitness and so on. And to do that, most often it's by working out or exercising. And so our text here tells us to work out.

But it is to work out our own salvation. So it's not concerning our physical health, but our spiritual health. So first of all, it's a salvation thing.

It's speaking to the saved. So whose salvation are we talking about here? Talking about our own.

Say, save or work out your own salvation. Your own. My own.

[8 : 12] Each one of us must work out his own salvation. And so what does that mean to work out?

One definition I came across, to work out, is to achieve or to accomplish by effort. So to achieve salvation, it means to work out salvation.

We must. You know, if we desire to achieve something or to accomplish something, how much effort do we put into that?

If we have a strong desire to see this through and to accomplish it, how much effort do we put in? If we're really serious, we'll give it our best shot.

We'll put in 100%. 100%. Then, how serious are we about our own salvation? Is it enough for us to say, you know, I've accepted Christ and then just sit back and do nothing about it?

[9 : 26] Let's take a quick look at James chapter 1. James 1, verses 21 and 22.

James 1, verses 21 and 22. Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

So it's telling us we need to be doers of the word, not only hearers.

Don't only hear it, take it in, but something needs to come out of it as well. Be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving ourselves.

If we only hear and we do not do, we are deceiving ourselves. We must be doers of what Scripture tells us to do.

[10 : 41] So speaking of putting in effort, we must not only be doing something about our salvation now and then, just on occasion when we think of it.

We must do everything that is to be done. We must persevere in it until the end. So how are we to work out our salvation?

Going back to our text, it tells us to work it out with fear and trembling. Now does this mean shaking? How much effort do you put into something when you're afraid, when it scares you?

You know, you don't put in 100%. You hold back, you hesitate, you don't give it your all. And yet we're to give 100% to working out our salvation each and every day.

So it must mean something else. It's not being afraid. To work out your salvation with fear and trembling is to do it with a great care, a seriousness.

[12 : 06] We serve a God who is all-powerful. He alone has the power to save us or to condemn us to eternal destruction. So we ought to fear Him, to have that healthy respect for Him.

So working out our salvation, we're talking about eternity here. Salvation of our souls. There's one thing very serious about it.

It is the destiny of our souls. Our lifetime here on earth, it's very short when you compare it with what's ahead.

Eternity doesn't have an end. It won't ever be over. Hebrews 4 verse 1 tells us, Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.

So be serious about entering His rest, entering God's rest. You know, it's amazing. We serve a God who is all-powerful.

[13 : 22] And He saw it fit to create us with the ability to make choices, to make our own choices. He gave us the choice to choose to believe in Him or not.

And so for those of us who do choose to believe in Him, He gives us the power to work our own salvation out. No, He didn't.

He didn't just ask and say, Well, I'll give you the choice to choose to be saved. But then He would take control from there and work that out in us.

He's given us of His power to go ahead and to work out our own salvation. And so this is a power to be exercised.

Not only now and then, but at all times. Not only on Sundays when we go to church and then the rest of the week we turn into someone else and we live a different life.

[14 : 31] This is a power to be exercised each and every day of the week. Paul talks about this at the start of verse 12.

Not only in my presence, but more so in my absence. So not doing it only as men pleasers on Sunday mornings when people see us, but also when no one is looking throughout the week.

As I read that and studied on it, thought about it, I was kind of reminded, an example, maybe revival meetings. We have revival meetings and we see people, they're moved to take action.

We've got a good speaker and he gets people fired up and wanting to serve God. And when the meetings are over, people go back home to their daily routines, their regular lives.

All of a sudden, that desire to go and do great things for the Lord, it goes away again. You know, every day should be a revival day.

[15 : 50] We should be on fire for the Lord every day. So take great care of your soul.

Work out salvation. Matthew 25 also came to my mind. So I was working on this.

It's the parable of the talents. And so we know, we know the parable how these servants were given talents. The one was given five. One with two and one was given one.

And so two of them went out and invested those talents. The one with five came back with ten. The one with two came back with four.

And the one that was only given one. He feared and he hid it and did nothing with it. And it brought no increase. And so the one that had hidden his one talent and did nothing with it, it was taken away from him and given to another.

[17 : 01] So the lesson out of that in regards to working out our own salvation is that our works must multiply if we hope to be rewarded.

And on working out your own salvation, let's also look at 2 Peter chapter 1. 2 Peter 1 verses 5 through 11.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue. To virtue, knowledge. To knowledge, self-control. To self-control, perseverance.

To perseverance, godliness. To godliness, brotherly kindness. And to brotherly kindness, love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For he who lacks these things is short-sighted even to blindness and has forgotten that he was cleansed from it. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure.

[18 : 25] For if you do these things, you will never stumble. For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So we have a list of things. We see it multiplying.

One added to another, to another, and it multiplies. And so we start off, add to your faith virtue. virtue.

So our faith, the starting point, we come to faith, we believe. And then so we add to our faith virtue, which is the high moral standards, behavior showing high moral standards.

And so to virtue, we add knowledge, wisdom. And to wisdom, to knowledge, self-control. So to control our behavior.

[19 : 23] And from self-control, we add perseverance. Here comes the working out, giving 100%. And to perseverance, godliness.

You know, the Christ-like behavior becomes more and more evident. And to godliness, brotherly kindness. And so we start to look out for each other.

And to brotherly kindness, love. And well, love is love. God is love. And so having these things, you will not be unfruitful or barren.

You will not stumble. And then in verse 11, this growth of our faith and adding to it these things ensures access into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

It ensures access. It says, entrance will be supplied to you abundantly. Ensured of attaining that entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[20 : 52] Going back to our text, faith. Faith requires as well, be doers and not hearers only. You know, our works are the proof of our faith, the fruit of our faith.

Yeah, we must remember that it's God's grace working in us. It's not of ourselves that we are working it out, working out our salvation.

Us working out our salvation, it depends on God working in us. God works in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

God supplies the whole ability for us to even begin to work out our salvation. We cannot act outside of His grace. We are dependent on it.

We can do nothing of ourselves. So we cannot lay any kind of claim to working out our own salvation, something that we have done.

[22 : 06] It has been God who has done it. All the praise and the glory go back to God. God continuing on in our text, verses 14 through 16, do all things without complaining and disputing that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

So we see our second resolution here, do all things without complaining and disputing.

And in essence, this second resolution here, it only builds on the first one. So working out our salvation, that working out to do it, to do each thing we do there without complaining and disputing.

We started off with working out our own salvation, and now we're digging in deeper yet, digging in further as to how we go about doing that, and it's without complaining and disputing.

Does that sound familiar? Complaining and disputing, doing things? You know, for those of us with children, how often do we hear these complaints and arguments?

[23 : 45] We give them chores to do. We ask them to do something. You know, we hear things like, I did it last time, or why do I always have to do it, or it's not fair.

We hear these things, right? We see that in our children. And I'd venture as far to say as, you know, for us that are older now, we've all been children.

We've all been there. We've done that. You know, and as we got older, maybe we didn't voice those complaints out loud as much anymore, but as we went to do a chore that we had no desire to do, how often have we mumbled complaints under our breath, or maybe even it's just a negative thought in our head.

Scripture tells us to work out our salvation, whatever that looks like on any given day, without complaining and arguments. Do Christians do this?

Do they really complain and argue? But working out their salvation? My fear is it's more common than we think it is. God inspired this verse to be put into Scripture, so it tells me there is an issue with that amongst Christians.

[25 : 23] We deal with those things, or we should be dealing with them. as Christians, we are to set Christ-like examples for others, to leave an impression on them that there is something different about a person who has chosen to follow Christ.

They notice a positive change in that person, a change that they too would then start to notice, and they would desire their own lives, desire it for themselves.

And so if we as Christians are complaining or disputing or murmuring about these things, that would hinder someone else from desiring to become a Christian.

why would they care to become a Christian if they're going to have the exact same old life that they have in that moment, if there's nothing different about it?

What's the point? So this talking about doing all things without complaining and disputing, is that with other people only?

[26 : 42] or could this be against God as well? I believe it is. You know, what if God is calling you, wants you to go talk to someone, maybe share the gospel with them, but you resist.

You tell them, not today, Lord. I'll do it another time. Or maybe, why me, Lord? Send someone else to that person. Or maybe it's something like maybe we're going through a low point in our life, we're going through a trial, and we question God about it.

Why, Lord? Why do I have to go through this trial? Murmurings and complaints against God. And there could be many more examples.

So when I think of complaining and murmuring against God, I'm reminded Old Testament scriptures, the Israelites, so many times they complained and murmured against God.

You know, they'd seen God's power, miracles He did for them. Surely they would have known that they would be cared for, they would be looked after by God.

[28 : 10] You know, they should have humbly accepted whatever circumstance they were in for the moment, knowing that God would see them through, He would provide a way for them. And yet, when things weren't just as they liked it, they murmured and they complained.

You know, and what happened to the Israelites when they murmured and complained, God punished them. You know, how many Israelites lost their lives because they complained and murmured against God?

Many did. And today, we still serve that exact same God. Dare we to complain against Him?

I'm thankful that He is so patient with us. And the reason that we are to do all things without complaining and disputing, in verse 15, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault.

fault. So what does it mean to be blameless and harmless? You know, it's to not be hurtful with our words and our deeds and giving no occasion to offense, to offend someone.

[29 : 49] Complaining and disputing, it causes hurts. So for us to come to the point where we humbly submit to God's authority without complaining or arguing against it, then we may reach the point where we no longer cause hurts, cause hurts to arise or offense to be taken against us.

being found blameless is a state where no longer a finger of accusation can be pointed against us.

There's no fault to be found. Being harmless has the sense of no danger being present with us.

Others feel no need to fear that we would be of any harm to them. They can feel safe when they are around us. As such, we become children of God without fault.

And where? In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. And so not only without fault before men, but without fault as children of God, without fault in our ways with God as well.

[31 : 26] We are of good report. We have a good reputation among men, but of even greater importance. We have peace with God knowing that we are right with him, that our relationship with him is healthy.

Then we can say, it is well with my soul. As children of God living in an ungodly world, we shine as lights in the world.

Our text tells us that we shine among them as lights in the world. Matthew 5 says that a city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

You know, the lights of that city up there on that hill are seen far and wide. You cannot hide it. We are like that city.

As children of God, we are like that city. We stand out. We cannot be hidden. Verse 16 in that same chapter in Matthew 5. It says, Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

[32 : 46] So the less we complain, the more we become blameless without fault and the brighter our light will shine. We are lights in this world, shining forth like a city on a hilltop, pointing others to our Savior, Jesus Christ, who is, and I quote from John chapter 8, verse 12, of the world.

So we are lights in this world, representing Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world. And so finally, as being lights in this world, we are exhorted to hold fast the word of life.

What is the word of life? It is the gospel. You know, this was Paul's desire here, that he might rejoice in the day of Christ.

the last days that his work, his efforts that he had put in to this church, to God's people, had not been in vain.

It was he and responding to it that brought us to the light. So hold fast to it. It is our hope and our stay.

[34 : 21] And not only hold fast to it for ourselves, but hold it out to others as well, that they too may hear the good news of salvation and claim it for themselves.

1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 58, offers us some encouragement. Let's read it. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 58.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

So it just sums it up again, the working out of our own salvation. Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of our own salvation, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

And so in conclusion, you know, as we enter New Year, 2023, and possibly we're making resolutions, instead of only focusing on ourself physically, let's open our Bibles and take a look at our spiritual side.

[35 : 54] Where are we at? How are we doing spiritually? What do I need to improve or maybe change? Are there resolutions that I need to make to ensure my soul's health?

New Year's resolutions can be a good thing. And so as we make them and we try to stick to them, let's not neglect working out our own salvation and doing all things in it without complaining and disputing.

These are resolutions to make not a one-time thing, not to do it one year and the next. Well, we'll move on to something else, something we need to renew year by year, day by day.

Caring for our own souls should be of utmost importance to us.

And so let us persevere in that. And as we go into the new year, let's give it our all. Let's give 100% to bring all the glory and honor and praise to God who alone has that power to save us.

[37 : 23] So in closing, I have one more New Year's resolution for us to consider. Maybe if you've never done this before, and even if you have, you know, it's always good to try and read through our Bibles in a year.

So I'd like to encourage each one of us, maybe this year, let's do that. Spend time in the Word. You know, find a guide.

There's guides out there you can get to that give you different portions of Scripture to read each day to help you to attain that goal, to read through your Bible in a year.

I want to encourage each one of us, let's do that this year. Let's spend time in God's Word and seek out ways that He wants us to work out our own salvation.

Let's pray. Dear God, we come before you this morning. We thank you for this day.

[38 : 38] We thank you for a new year. Lord, as we look forward to the year ahead, Lord, we set goals, we have desires, things that we would like to persevere in throughout this year and in the coming years.

And as we do this, Lord, just convict us, give us a desire to, at the very top of that list, put in the health of our soul.

Lord, to work out our own salvation. Just may your Spirit be alive and well in us and pushing us to each and every day to do the work you have for us, to bring about our salvation to ensure that entrance will be given into your kingdom.

So, Lord, as we leave here today and as we go about our week, Lord, just walk with each one, guide and direct us, and may we bring all the honor and the glory and the praise back to you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.