

# Resolutions of Bible Characters

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[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, as we get started this morning, this is the first Sunday of the brand new year, and so we're excited to be here together today. And as everybody is aware, what does everyone do at the beginning of every year?

Make resolutions. And do you know what January the 9th is? January the 9th is National Quitters Day. You think I'm kidding? I think it's the 9th. It may be another day this week.

But according to most surveys, most people make resolutions, and by the second week of the year, they've already given up on those resolutions.

So this morning, I'm hoping that these resolutions that we make, based upon our study of some of these Bible characters that we will look at this morning, is that by the 9th, we haven't already given up on these resolutions.

So it's resolution time again. But really, resolutions, as we think about them, are rather limited. Doing better can't save us.

[ 1 : 17 ] Doing better can't make us a better person. And so we have to understand the limitations of resolutions. And we understand, I believe everyone here understands, that works don't commend us to God.

So just simply being better people serve us no purpose. It is when we are empowered by God's Holy Spirit, and we are followers of Jesus Christ, that makes a difference.

And God will compound the effect of us being Christ-like, and us serving Him, obeying Him, and doing His will. So, that being said, what are the values of, or what is the value of resolutions?

Well, first of all, it's good to set goals for ourselves. Because if we aim at nothing, we will hit it every time. And if we don't set our goals, if we don't have aspirations that are very high, we won't accomplish very much, or there won't be anything that we can look back at the end of our life and say, I am so thankful that I can see the difference that my life made, or the difference that our lives made in the world.

If we don't reach for anything, and if we don't reach for things that actually are beyond our grasp, then chances are we may have a very ho-hum, a very boring life, and it's we get up in the morning, we go to work, we come home, and we go to bed.

[ 2 : 47 ] And while many are satisfied with that, I believe there's more to life than that. There's more in life to enjoy, and there's also more in life to appreciate, and to build into the lives of others.

But we have to be careful. If we make a vow to God, and we say, God, I am going to, we have to be careful to what? We have to be careful to do it.

We looked this morning in Ecclesiastes 5, verse 4. This will be our starting point this morning.

Ecclesiastes 5, verse 4. The Bible says, When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it, for he has no pleasure in fools.

Pay what you have vowed. And it's amazing, it's interesting, that the wording that is used here in Ecclesiastes, that Solomon uses, and he says, For those who say to God that they will do something, and don't do it, he says they're foolish.

Because think about it. It's one thing to promise something to a person, another individual, and fall short. It's quite another thing to promise something to God, because God never forgets.

[ 4 : 01 ] God will come through, and God will remember what we have promised him. And so we have to be careful that when we promise something, or when we commit to something, that we will follow through and accomplish it.

Now there are many in the Bible, there are many in Scripture, Old Testament, New Testament, that have made resolutions, that have determined that they were going to do something with our life, to God, or for God.

And so let's look at, let's examine some of these Bible resolutions this morning. The first thing, and the first one that we will look at this morning, is Jacob's resolution to give his tithe.

I'm not going to belabor this. We talked about this last week, but we see this in Genesis 28, 22. And this stone which I have set, as a pillar, shall be God's house, and of all that you give me, I will surely give a tenth to you.

Now some of the conditions under which this resolution was made, Jacob was fleeing from Esau, because he had defrauded him. And so Esau is trying to pursue him to get back to Jacob.

[ 5 : 22 ] And so he, Jacob makes a resolution to give what little bit he had. Here, Jacob has very little to give at this point in time, but he says, he makes a resolution that he will give to God.

So here are some, just a few thoughts about tithing. And this is, again, a little bit of a review from last week. Genesis chapter 14, verse 20.

We know that Abraham commenced it. Genesis 28, 22. Jacob continued it. In Malachi, chapter 3, verse 10, our key verse for last week, Malachi commanded it.

In Matthew 23, 23, Jesus commended it. And so all through Scripture, from pre-law, all the way to Jesus, tithing is not only done, not only committed, but it's also commanded, it's also commended by Jesus.

So we know that giving back to God is very important to him. Now, does tithing apply to Christians? We know in 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 2, that it's clear that as believers, New Testament believers, that we are to give a portion of our income.

[ 6 : 47 ] We see Paul, the Apostle Paul, talking about that. Also last week, we noticed that, we found that tithing was given prior to the law commanding it.

And so it's pre-Old Testament law. This is one of the easiest places for us, as followers of Christ, to let down. Because there are periods of time in our life where, it sometimes is feast and famine. Sometimes things are going well. Sometimes bills pile up because of unexpected expenses. And it's more difficult for us to give. And so it is one of the easiest areas of our Christian life for us to let down.

It's also one of the most practical areas to prove our faith. If we stop and think about it, this is typically the last area for us to relinquish to God.

That is our money, our income, our time. And so, so when we, when we do completely, fully surrender our life, but also our pocketbook to God, it's also one of the earliest, it's also one of the quickest things to go when we begin falling away from God.

[ 8 : 03 ] One of the things that we, that, that we see, uh, in, in the local church. As a matter of fact, this is borne out. Uh, typically before a person leaves the church, they stop giving a period of time before.

So really it's important. It's important for us to understand this concept. It's, it's important for the pastor to understand this concept because when a person stops giving, that's a time when the pastor should be able to go and say, what's wrong?

Is there anything going on in your life? Maybe it's a financial issue and maybe we can help with a help fund. Maybe it's a spiritual issue. Maybe they're, they're pulling away from God. Maybe it's a misunderstanding. Maybe somebody upset them.

Maybe something we're doing is, is bothering them. But either way, when we know that a person stops giving, then we know there's something wrong and we can take care of it.

But it's when we don't know, or we don't do anything about it. And somebody slips away in the night and there's somebody that we could have, we could have helped, we could have rescued, or we could have fixed an issue.

[ 9 : 07 ] And maybe it was just simply a misunderstanding. So it's normally, it's the last thing to be, uh, relinquished to God. And it's the first thing to go when we begin, slipping or when we get upset or, uh, or the like.

So that's something that we, we understand that we were challenged last week by Malachi to stop robbing God and to give of our tithe.

So let's see how the Lord rewarded Jacob. Genesis 32, 10 Jacob, uh, resolved to give the tithe to God. Verse 10. He's Jacob says, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, mercies and of all the truth, which you have shown your servant for.

I crossed over this Jordan with my staff. So basically he comes over with his, with his stick. He had, that's about what he had to his possession.

He comes over with his staff and he says, now I have become two companies. God has blessed him. God has blessed his family. God has blessed his income. God has blessed him, uh, with favor. [10:14] And so he says, I just can't, I came over with very little and look how God has blessed me. So God blessed him for his resolution.

And secondly, the second resolution that we see this morning is David's resolution concerning God's word. We see that in Psalm 119 and verses 15 and 16.

David's resolution concerning God's word. Let's take a look at that resolution. Here's what David says. He says, I will. That's a resolution. David says, I will.

That's a choice that he makes. That's a promise that he makes. He says, I will meditate on your precepts and contemplate your ways.

Verse 16. I will delight myself in your statutes. I will not forget your word. It's an attitude. And we have to understand that what, when David says, I will meditate on your precepts.

[11:23] This word, this word precepts meant instructions, procedures. And so what David is saying, God, what you tell me to do and your procedures and what you've, what you've given as instructions, he says, I will think about those.

I will dwell on those. I will meditate on those. I will mull those over in my mind. I will keep my attention toward those things that you tell us. So David says, I'll meditate on your precepts and I will contemplate your ways.

What happens when we contemplate? Do you know the problem that most of us have? We don't think enough.

I mean, literally, we don't think enough. Something happens and we make a mental note of it, maybe, and we go on.

What was the one thing that was true or that, that, that was true. And that, that is true of anyone who has made a, an extreme difference in society, in, in, in, in, in, in, in the, in the biblical realm.

[12:43] And what is one thing that we, that we, that we know about those individuals, people who have been world changers. They're people of thought. They think, how does this impact me?

How does this impact the world? And as we think, and as we contemplate, how does this, what differences is making my life? How am I going to respond based upon this?

What is the right way to respond? How should this change my thought process? How should this change my actions? And we, we contemplate.

We need to, I think we need to contemplate life more. And sometimes just simply, we wake up and we see a beautiful sunset. How often do we contemplate?

God, you are so wonderful. Your majesty, your, the beauty of your creation, just contemplate what that means. And the benefits that God has given us.

[13:48] David says, I will contemplate your ways. Now we know that God's ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts higher than our thoughts. But have we even stopped to try and figure them out?

Rather than just saying, well, I can't understand God, so why bother? No, contemplate his ways. What are you doing, God? What direction are you moving me in? What, what are you trying to teach me through your word?

What are you trying to teach me through, through life? What are you trying to teach me through our circumstances? So David says, I will contemplate your ways. And then the next thing in verse 16, how many of us have fallen prey to periods of time in our life when God's word or spending time with God seems to be boring?

Come on, if we'll, if we'll admit it, there are times in our life where we, maybe, maybe we get so caught up in ourselves, so caught up in our busyness, and, or, or we're, we are reading Leviticus.

I mean, it's hard to delight oneself in Leviticus. But, what does David say? It really is all in an attitude. If your spouse or someone else says, let's go to this thing, maybe, maybe you ladies, your, your husband wants to go to a sporting event, or guys, your wife wants to go shopping, and, you know, it's not that exciting for you.

[15:21] But if you say, to yourself, I will find something to enjoy on this trip, chances are, you'll have a better chance of not being a sourpuss while you're there.

Am I right? Okay, it's, it's all in the attitude. And so, if we approach God's word and says, I will delight in your word, God, help me to find something that's exciting today.

Help me to find something that maybe is not exciting, but something that maybe is something that I've never really understood or realized or, or, or contemplated on before. So, it's a, it's a, it's an attitude.

It's a choice. I will delight myself in your statutes. And then he says next, I will what? I will not forget your word.

What is, what is that? What, what can we intimate from that? what do we have to do in order not to forget God's word? I think we have to memorize it, hide it in our heart, or meditate on it, think about it, contemplate it.

[16:34] Not necessarily that we always have to know every verse, word for word, but important concepts. We have to be able to understand and know the concept, even if we can't come back with it verbatim.

We have to be able to understand. So he says, I will not forget your word. And I believe we all know the importance of meditating on God's word. Proverbs 23, verse 7, for as he, a person, thinks in his heart, so is he.

So what you think about, the Bible says, that's the way you are. As you think in your heart, if we always think negative thoughts about people, guess what?

We're a negative person. And it's going to come through in our relationships. And people will not enjoy being around us. We will not be uplifting to others. We will not be encouragers.

Because as we think in our heart, so are we. Eat and drink, he says to you, but his heart is not with you. So if we are really not, if our heart is not right with God, we're not be right with God.

[17:42] And so we have to realize that what we meditate on, what we think about most of the time, most of the day, is what is going to make a difference in our life.

We should be putting God's word into our minds on a regular basis. He says, I will delight. He said, I will delight myself in your statutes.

It's not drudgery, but as we said, it's an attitude. We determine that we're going to delight in it. It can become enjoyable and not drudgery. If we think of the Bible as God's love letter to us, think about it, guys or gals.

If someone wrote you that love letter back when you were courting or even in your marriage, think about how important that was to you.

You read every word. And sometimes you even try to read between the lines because it was so important to you. And because it was from someone that you love, it was from someone that loves you.

[18:44] And if we think of God's word in that fashion, that it's his love letter to us, it's going to make a difference in the way we read it. And he says, I will not forget your word.

That calls for memorization. Now, I don't think any of us are too old to memorize. It may not come as easy as it does to little ones, but we're never too old to memorize.

How many of you have ever done the Bible Memory Association, BMA, verses as adults? Okay. So it's possible. So we may not be able to memorize as many verses, but we still can.

Why not try starting with one verse a week? You can commit to one verse a month, whatever it is, to say, this is an important verse to me, and I will memorize it.

And I will, every day or two or three times a week, I will review it in my mind. I'll make a little card that I can put it on my visor, put it on my mirror, and I can memorize it, and I can review it, and I can hide God's word in my heart, because God's Holy Spirit can bring back that word, just the way he did for Jesus when he was being tempted by Satan.

[20:01] And God can use it when we least expect it. And when he places a situation before us, and we're thinking, well, what do I do? And then God's word pops into our mind, and he can guide us through that.

Another thing that we can do is resolve to read the Bible through in a year. Read God's word through in a year. There are so many Bible reading plans out there.

Our Daily Bread devotionals come with a Bible reading plan, that if you follow that plan, you can read through in a year. There's Robert Murray McShane's Bible reading plan. There are other plans that have you reading a little bit in the Old Testament, a little bit in the New Testament, and Psalms. And so you're reading in three different portions. So it's not just when you get to Leviticus, or when you get to the book of Numbers, you're not just reading a whole bunch of figures and numbers for the next week.

You can, okay, let me get through all of these reiterations of what the temple law and the law for. [ 21 : 13 ] If you ever get to the portion of the law about cleansing fabrics, walls of your home, or cooking utensils when it comes to leprosy, and determining whether it's leprosy or whether it's not, or whether it's this, and you have to wait so many days, and you have to go to the priest, and you've got to burn the clothing, or you've got to wash the plate, and if it's wooden, you have to throw it away.

You know, all of these things, it kind of gets a little bit tedious. But then you read that portion, and then you can go to Psalms, or you can go to the New Testament. A lot of different reading plans. Four chapters a day gets us through the Bible in a year. Four chapters, on average, will get us through the Bible in a year. Or three chapters on weekdays, and five on Sunday, will also get us through the Bible in a year.

So David's resolution was, I will commit to meditating on your word. I will hide your word in my heart. I will consider it a pleasure, a delight to spend time in your word.

And then thirdly, Daniel's resolution concerning a clean life. We see that in Daniel 1.8. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.

[ 22 : 34 ] We could stop there. But it goes on to say, his was specific in time and place. He had been, he and some other young Hebrew, young men, young boys, had been taken, had been taken captive, and brought into a foreign country.

And they were not used to, because they had committed to the Jewish diet, the Old Testament dietary laws. And they did not want to break God's law.

And so what Daniel did was, he purposed in his heart that he wouldn't defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore he requested of the chief, of the eunuchs, that he might not defile himself.

So what made the difference for Daniel? Did he wait until the moment and decided, well, is this expedient or not? Am I going to get in trouble or not?

What did he decide? He had purposed in his heart. He had decided beforehand, before he even asked, I am not going to defile myself.

[ 23 : 44 ] I'm going to stay pure. I'm going to stay clean. I'm going to obey God. Now thankfully, we don't have to deal with those Old Testament dietary laws. We can enjoy certain things today that Daniel couldn't enjoy back in his day.

But nonetheless, he had determined. But we have here the testimony of a teenager, probably 15, 16 years old, these young men, because they were still being schooled.

They chose the younger ones who could be taught, who were still learning. So here we have the testimony of this young man.

His country was overtaken by a foreign power. He was also chosen to study at the palace. They were going to learn astronomy. They were going to learn a lot of different things.

And they were going to be using these young men as the future scientists, as the future scholars of their day. But he decided in his heart that he was going to be different.

[ 24 : 53 ] It's just so easy to go along with a crowd. But he decided to be different. The word defile here means to soil or to pollute.

He decided that he wouldn't be polluted by things that weren't allowed by God. There's plenty of reading material that pollutes. There are plenty of viewing material that defiles.

So we have to be careful in our lives. So a decision for holiness goes against the flesh. A decision for holiness goes against the flesh.

Because what does the Bible say? The flesh and the spirit are at war with each other all the time. God's word says we are to do this. Our bodies, our flesh says, you know what?

I'd rather do that because we think it's more enjoyable or we think it will feel better. We think it will be more fun. And so we have the flesh warring against the spirit. God says, do this or don't do this.

[ 25 : 52 ] And our fleshly nature is warring against that. But holy living, we have to understand, holy living always pays dividends. Even if we...

Now this is a big if. Now we know that we believe in God. We know we believe in the existence of God. And there are those who, as far as apologetics are concerned, have utilized this.

If we're talking to an atheist or talking to someone who's not sure if they believe in God or they're not sure the virtues of living a holy life, think about it.

Even if there were no God, if we chose to live a life that was pure, where we watched what we ate, where we watched what we put into our bodies, where we watched what we put into our minds, where we kept all these commands of God, would our life be better off or would our life be worse off?

Think about it. Even if there were no God, if we lived according to... If we lived a biblical life, if we lived according to the commands of God, we would be so much...

[ 27 : 09 ] Our relationships would be better. I believe our health would be better. I believe in so many ways that we would be so much better off. And so these people who say, well, you know, why do we have to obey God?

Well, for one thing, it's good for you. But for the other thing, is He created us. He loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for us.

So this determination to live a holy life pays dividends not only in this life, but it also pays great dividends in the life to come when we will meet Him in heaven.

So what do we get from all of this? Well, what are our resolutions for Christ today? What are we going to resolve? And think about the impact these could make for you the next year.

On our connection cards this morning, we have three next steps. First next step, maybe this morning, your resolution needs to be, I will resolve to give my tithe.

[ 28 : 15 ] I will resolve to tithe with God's money, with the money that He has allowed me to have. Second, maybe your resolution is going to be, I will resolve to memorize God's Word.

I will resolve to hide God's Word in my heart. I will resolve to meditate on God's Word. I will resolve to read the Bible through in a year. I will resolve to spend 30 minutes a day studying God's Word. I will resolve to take a verse every day and apply it to my life. However you choose, make this resolution with God's Word.

I will meditate on His Word. I will spend more time in His Word. Or thirdly, I will resolve to live a clean life. Think about it. Is there anything in our life right now that's physically harming or detrimental to you?

Is there anything that you're reading or you're seeing that is emotionally or spiritually detrimental to you? And then we resolve to live a pure life.

[ 29 : 19 ] So as we think about these things, what are our resolutions? Now there are other resolutions we could make that won't have any earth-shattering, eternal, you know, give up chocolate.

You know what I mean? That'd be hard to give up. But you know what? You know, some people choose to do that because it's something they feel. But I believe that if we at least pay attention to these resolutions that will make a difference in our life and will pay dividends for eternity, I think those are important for us.

Let's pray. Lord, this morning we thank You for Your goodness, for all You do in our lives. We ask that You would help us to resolve to accomplish for You what You would have us to accomplish, that we would resolve to be faithful with the resources that You are provided to us, that we will be faithful in following Your Word.

We will also be faithful in living a holy life. We thank You for this. We ask that You would bless each one here today, be with those who weren't able to be here as well through illness or through work. And we look forward to accomplishing Your Word and Your will this week. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.