

This Week at the Creek

is an e-mail ministry of

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Here's the text from the pastor's Sunday message:

Resolution

Mark 8:27-30

December 31, 2006

This past Friday morning George walked into the office, took a deep cleansing breath, and told his cohorts, "There's nothing in the world like getting up at six in the morning, going for a run around the park, and taking a brisk shower all before breakfast." One of his impressed cohorts asked, "So George, how long have you been doing this?" George smiled and said, "I start Monday morning."

Most of us make some kind of New Year's resolutions. I certainly do. Most of mine have to do with the person I want to become physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. For instance, I make resolutions about my diet and exercise, about the books I should read, about the time to spend with my family, about becoming a better serving pastor, about ways to grow more devoted to the Lord.

There are a couple of definitions in the *Concise Oxford American Dictionary* that do a good job of expressing the true strength of will that must be behind making and fulfilling a resolution: one says, "a firm decision to do or not to do something"; but listen especially to this other definition, which says, "the quality of being determined or resolute – admirably **purposeful, determined, and unwavering.**"

What we find in this Bible passage is a confession from Peter, to be sure. But there's more. Peter here makes a very resolute resolution. It's interesting to me that Jesus first asked the disciples, "Who do people say I am?" Of course, the disciples happily reported Jesus' favorable ratings in the polls. For the most part, the average man in the street held a fairly good opinion of Jesus. And those such views offset somewhat the slander of His bitter opponents, who regarded Him as

a pawn of Beelzebul, and the worries of His kinsmen, who thought He was out of His mind, and the bias of His fellow citizens in Nazareth, who dismissed Him as just one of them. Still, most people – according to the disciples – put Jesus in the pigeonhole of a prophetic figure, someone like John the Baptist or Elijah. At the very least, these people believed that God had indeed sent Him.

But these people had not quite hit on the whole truth, which is why Jesus reworded the question for His disciples: "Who do you say I am?" Do you follow the importance in His line of questioning? It simply isn't enough to know what others say about or believe about Jesus; you must formulate your own resolution. It is entirely up to you to move from curiosity to **commitment**, to move from admiration to **adoration**, to move from recognition to **resolution**. The apostle Peter made this giant leap of faith, and so can you as a Christian believer. Peter moved to the head of the class by giving the answer that made sense of all that he and his fellow disciples had witnessed. This confession – this resolution – occurs in the very center of the Gospel of Mark, which leads me to believe that everything else either leads up to it or follows it. For Peter, this is a determined and unwavering resolution – one that he would build the rest of his life and all of eternity upon: "You are the Christ."

Like Peter, it is critical as a follower of Jesus that you see Him as more than just another in a long line of messengers God has dispatched to the people of this world. You must – for yourself – know and understand and accept that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. As you make resolutions for the upcoming year, will you go beyond mere words? Will you go beyond empty ritualistic action? Will you really live your life based on the determination that Jesus was who He said He was? From your heart and soul, will you so resolve to truly live out your faith to the extent that you'd bank the rest of your life and eternity on it? Such a resolution would be a leap of faith of the magnitude taken by the first and all successive disciples of Jesus Christ. It is a giant leap.

Charles Richards hit the nail on the head when he said, "Don't be fooled by the calendar. There are only as many days in the year as we make use of. One person gets a week's **value** out of a year while another person gets a full year's **value** out of a week." So how will you make use of your days in the year that lies ahead? If you will serve Christ, it will take resolve and determination on your part.

At the beginning of this past year, one high school principal decided to post his teachers' New Year's resolutions on the bulletin board. As the teachers gathered around the bulletin board, a great commotion started. One of the teachers was loudly complaining. "Why weren't my resolutions posted?" She was throwing such a temper tantrum that the principal hurried to his office to see if he had overlooked her resolutions. Sure enough, he had mislaid them on his desk. But before rushing to post them on the bulletin board, he glanced down at them. He was humorously astounded when he saw her first resolution: "Not to let the little things upset me." Remember, God will help you, but it takes **resolve**

and determination on your part.

Steve Brown taught swimming and diving for a number of years, but there's one young boy he especially remembers: Billy. Billy had watched professional divers over and over again on television; his desire to dive like them was so strong though that he refused to take the time needed to learn the basics. Time after time Brown tried to help Billy see that the most important thing about diving was to keep his head in the proper position. If his head entered the water properly, Brown explained, the rest of his body would enter the water properly – at least more properly than it had been! Still, Billy would dive into the pool, do a belly flop, and pop his head up out of the water grinning. "Mr. Brown, were my feet together?" "Billy, I don't care whether your feet were together or not," Brown shouted back. "Make sure your head is straight, then everything else will work out." The next time Billy would stand on the edge of the pool and really concentrate. Then he would dive and once again make a mess of it. "Mr. Brown, were my hands together?"

"Billy," Brown would groan in frustration, "I'm going to get you a neck brace and weld it onto your head. For the hundredth time, if your head is right, the rest of you will be right. If your head is wrong, the rest of you will be wrong."

And isn't that true in all of life? If our head is wrong, it won't be very long until our body follows suit. If our head is wrong, our marriage will likely suffer. If our head is wrong, our priorities will be fouled up. If our head is wrong, it will adversely affect every single one of our relationships – especially our relationship with God. Once more, it will take resolve and determination.

But how do we launch out with such a resolution? With the first small step! Oddly enough, the way to get started with a resolution is to get started! Ariane de Bonvoisin initiated a new website, called First30Days.com, with the idea that a journey of a thousand miles always starts with one step. The website notes that, "The exciting thing about change, in a strange way, is that it is guaranteed to happen, yet we all act as though it's a shock when it does. It's kind of a human paradox." Designed to provide support and community to those going through life changes, the website covers topics ranging from losing a loved one to dealing with a medical diagnosis. With the New Year upon us, it also tackles problems such as losing weight or beginning a new fitness regime.

As we face the beginning of a new year, many of us are making what portend to be some very meaningful resolutions; we're trying to initiate some positive changes in our lives. But doing so can be an annual ritual of disappointment and frustration if we don't realize that it's impossible to take the journey of a thousand miles without that first critical step – and that first critical step takes a certain measure of spiritual discipline. Have you been prayerful about the first step?

The apostle Paul handed down some wonderfully specific directions for living each day. To the Philippians he wrote, "Forgetting what lies behind, I strain forward to what is ahead." If you've ever been to a circus, you've no doubt

seen the huge bull elephants chained to a peg in the ground. Maybe it occurred to you that the elephant could easily pull the peg out of the ground and escape. But he doesn't even try. Why? Because as a baby elephant he was tied to a huge stake that he could not pull out of the ground. Weeks of pulling and tugging only wore a trench around the stake, and so he finally gave up. Now that he's full-grown with the strength and physical ability to rip the peg out of the ground, he remembers only the futility of past efforts and doesn't even attempt to escape. He is conditioned to fail. If you're straining forward to what the Lord has **ahead** for you, make a fresh start and forget the things that may have been holding you back in the **past**.

But guess what? You still won't be perfect! Even with all the resolve and determination in the world, you will encounter failure. That much I promise. There will be those times when you'll slip back a tad from your commitment to the Lord; there will be those times when your adoration shifts backward to admiration; there will be those times when your resolve wavers. The thing that separates a person with resolution from the person without resolution is that when they fall – and both will – the person with resolution stands back up, brushes himself off, and continues purposefully, determinedly, and unwaveringly down the path that he has resolved to walk. The person without resolution either stays down or turns back.

Christ Himself has blazed the trail ahead of you. He walks with you, and He is constantly helping you to grow stronger in Him. Today take the first step toward becoming the person of resolution and commitment God longs for you to be.

Let us pray: Lord, help us to go beyond words or even actions; help us to be purposefully resolved in both our commitment to and our adoration of You. Help us to take that giant leap of faith that it takes to truly follow Your discipline, to obey You, to be Your disciple. We so resolve for Your glory and in Your name.

Sources

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