

Hebrews-We Resolve

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (Hebrews 1:1-4 ESV)

²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23 ESV)

Hebrews: We Resolve

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Hebrews 10:19-25

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Introduction:

Good morning and happy new year! Please open up your Bibles to Hebrews 10:19.

Now before we begin, how many of you have made some new years resolutions for this coming year? I will lay my cards on the table. I am not a fan of them. And that's because so many of our goals are rooted in self-glorification. Rather than pointing to who God is and what He has done for us, we make resolutions which have the end goal of shining the spot light on us! Anybody here guilty of that? I know I am!

But someone who understood the value and importance of *God centred* resolutions was the theologian Jonathan Edwards. Here are a few of them:

Resolved, never to speak evil of anyone, so that it shall tend to his dishonor, more or less, upon no account except for some real good.

Resolved, after afflictions, to inquire, what I am the better for them, what good I have got by them, and what I might have got by them.

Resolved, to strive to my utmost every week to be brought higher in religion, and to a higher exercise of grace, than I was the week before.

Resolved, to maintain the strictest temperance in eating and drinking.

Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.¹

Those are purposeful resolutions which all have in them the end goal of bringing glory to God. For Edwards, the goal was to keep these resolutions so as to savour the goodness of God more and more. And I would submit to you that if our resolutions were rooted in knowing, savouring, and glorifying God more in 2022, they would look drastically different from what Hollywood, Facebook, twitter, or the magazine rack would suggest.

Our weight loss and muscle growth goals would not be rooted in showing off to one another but in our desire to live healthier lives and to honour God with our bodies. The motivation for putting the half-eaten chip bag down would be less about what others think and more about treating our bodies as the temples of the Holy Spirit.

Our goals to read more books and increase our knowledge would not be rooted in bragging rights but in being better stewards of our time and gifts.

Our career goals would be rooted in pleasing God with the gifts He has given us, in being salt and light in the world and not in increasing our status or buying fancier cars.

So how do we transform our goals and resolutions? We start and stay in God's Word. We look to Him to direct our thoughts and goals. So that is what we are going to do this morning. We are going to sit under His Word and submit to all that HE would have of us resolve to do. With these things in mind, hear now from the holy, timeless, always necessary, living and all active word to us today. Hebrews 10:19-25:

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how

¹ Jonathan Edwards, accessed via <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-resolutions-of-jonathan-edwards>, 2006.

to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:19-25 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Now just before we dive into our text, I want to reassure you that if you feel like we just jumped right into the middle of something big, you are right! In fact, the text we just read actually serves as the author's main exhortation-the main command of the book.

So we are here at a hinge point in the book. He has explained what we are to believe, and now he says LIVE THIS WAY!

And simply put, the first 10 chapters of the book could be summed up in three words:

JESUS IS BETTER!

He's better than the prophets who testified about Him. He's better than the angels who he dispatches for His service. He's better than Moses. He's better than the priesthood. He's better than the sacrifices. The entire Old Testament was pointing forward to and preparing us to see and delight in JESUS!

And BECAUSE Jesus is better, we should – no, we MUST – live differently. That's what our passage is about this morning.

So let's jump into our text this morning and pull out four resolutions that we need to make top priority this year. They are *not* novel. They are *not* ground breaking. They are some of the resolutions that the people of God have always and will always need to ensure that they hold fast and serve God faithfully as they wait for the return of Christ.

Four Resolutions

The first resolution that we can pull from our text is that we must:

1. Resolve to Remember

Sounds easy enough doesn't it? But we know that we are so prone to forget. We are great at forgetting what God has done for us in the *past* which leads us to doubt that He will be good to us in the *future*. So the author of Hebrews sums up what he has been preaching to the Church by saying this:

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God (Hebrews 10:19-21 ESV)

For the sake of time, we can't unpack all that is here for us but I do want to zoom in on a few things. The Church that this letter was written to was made of up people who were tempted to fall away from their Christian faith *back into* their Jewish roots. Isn't that interesting? It wasn't that they were going to flat out leave religion behind. They were tempted to go BACK to Judaism which was the equivalent of abandoning their Christian faith! They had forgotten and lost sight of all who Jesus was. The pressures that they were facing and had faced were weakening their resolve. The temptation to fall away was growing. What was the antidote?

Simply put: REMEMBER.

Remember all that God has done to save you from your sins and bring you home! Remember that Jesus was the final sacrifice for sins. Remember that He entered into the holy of holies and offered His own blood. Do you remember our study of the Day of the Atonement back in the summer? There was only day in the entire year where the High Priest would enter the holy of holies. And he would take the blood of the sacrifices and sprinkle it on the ark of the covenant. There was only ONE day in the entire year where was this privilege allowed. But the author of Hebrews says that through Jesus, through His sacrifice, we have unlimited access to God! Jesus fulfilled all that the Day of Atonement was pointing to. He entered into the holy of holies on our behalf offering HIMSELF. And that through that offering, we can enter and stay once and for all!

The sacrifices under the Old Covenant were many and ongoing. But Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice to God and with that secured our eternal salvation ONCE AND FOR ALL. There is nothing else to do. There is nothing else to offer. Jesus has paid our debt in FULL. His righteous and sinless life was traded for yours and mine. He fulfilled all that God had demanded of humanity perfectly. He never once put His own glory above His Father's. He never once broke the command to love God with all of His heart and His neighbour as Himself. And then He died bearing the curse of sin. Not brought about by any sin of His own but yours, mine and the worlds.

And then God rose Him from the dead stamping His approval on the completed work of Christ. One author puts it this way:

The resurrection was the Father's "Amen" to the finished work of Christ.²

REMEMBER THIS. Remember that your salvation is COMPLETE.

Friends, to be a Christian is to be someone who is constantly looking back to the redemption found in Christ. You can never outgrow it. You can never add to it. Some of us are really good at forgetting this aren't we? And then we fall right back into trying to earn the love of God. All while God is reminding us that the work is FINISHED. Christ has PAID IT ALL. He's the end of our redemption.

As we begin this year, let's resolve to remember this. Let's resolve to begin our mornings washing our minds with this truth. And in the midst of turbulent times, keep this truth at the top of our minds. Remember.

And secondly, this text challenges us to:

2. Resolve to Draw Near

Look with me to verse 22:

² Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 59.

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:22 ESV)

This is a call to take our *first* resolution, that is to remember the greatness and finality of our salvation, and to put it into action! In other words, don't just believe the right things, let them lead you to the throne of God through the work of Jesus! Let these truths bring you home! Draw near to God in the name of Jesus.

And the charge is not only to draw near but to do it with ASSURANCE. The writer says it this way:

Let us draw near with a true heart in **full assurance of faith**. (Hebrews 10:22 ESV)

Do you see that? God doesn't call us to mere sentimental and wavering belief. He calls us to come to Him with FULL ASSURANCE believing Jesus really did accomplish all that He set out to do!

I remember one year when my hockey team was going to move up one level to rep. Tryouts for the team would be happening shortly after the current season ended and I *assumed* I would make the team and everything would carry on as before. But this all changed when I was talking to a few of the other players. Instead of reassuring me, they rocked my world by declaring that I was 'on the bubble.' My spot wasn't secured and I would have to work and assume that I had to earn my spot. I was devastated. Have you ever felt that?

Friends, that's not how it is supposed to be as we approach our heavenly Father, but for many of us it is. You see God doesn't want His children doubting their standing with Him. We are not 'on the bubble.' Our standing with God is secure. We have made the team and there are no cuts!

And the reason for this is in the same verse. The author says:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, **with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water**. (Hebrews 10:22 ESV)

God *wants* us to come as children to their loving *Father*. He wants us to come to Him confidently and securely. He wants us to come with consciences free from guilt and shame. Why? Because Jesus has taken all our guilt and shame and bore it on the Cross! So that we can come with bold and unwavering confidence to the God of all creation!

Do you believe that? Have you felt what a clean conscience feels like? Maybe that's something you need to pray for this year. That the Holy Spirit would take this truth and apply it so directly to your heart and mind that right belief would lead to right action. Draw near with assurance and a clean conscience.

A question we should all be asking of ourselves is this, was 2021 a year in which we made it a priority to draw near to God? Was He our top priority? Was He even our second or third priority?

If He wasn't, let's make this the year in which God is THE top priority. So you look back at 2022 as THE year in which your priorities were realigned.

And it's not rocket science to make this happen. It starts simple. Resolve to get up earlier each day and begin each day with time in God's Word and prayer. Instead of beginning and ending our days with our cell phones we should displace them with prayer. Resolve to be obedient to the Holy Spirit's leading. Resolve to pray without ceasing as you go about your day. For those of you who get to sit down for a lunch break, don't use it to scroll on your phone but to bring a book that will stir up your faith. Set aside times each day, whether it's 2 minutes or 10, in which you pray. Whether it's alone or with your family, make these times habitual.

Resolve to have your calendar reflect that what is *most* important is not the growth of your business but the salvation and growth of your family! Don't let anything get in the way of your pursuit of knowing God more and more. Draw near to Him with the assurance that your sins are paid for in full and that He loves you. Make this top priority.

Thirdly, and tied closely with drawing near to God, is the challenge to:

3. Resolve to Hold Fast

As we draw near to God, there is also the call to the persevere. The call to put down deep roots and be unwavering in our walk with God. Look with me to Hebrews 10:23:

²³ **Let us hold fast** the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23 ESV)

Don't you love that language? *Hold fast without wavering*. The author of Hebrews saw that this Church needed to be reminded to hold fast. To hold firm to their Christian faith and hope. They were tempted to fall away, whatever the cause was, whether it be persecution or pressure from their community to return to their Jewish faith. They were tempted to untether themselves from all that God has done for them in Christ.

That's what happens when hard seasons come isn't it? Holding fast, unwaveringly is a tough call. But that is what we called to do. Jesus put it this way:

No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:62 ESV)

And again:

And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Mark 13:13 ESV)

We are called to hold fast because it's only those who persevere to the end who get the prize.

So don't give up! So hold fast without wavering. Dig deep roots. That's a fitting challenge for the Church today isn't it? I don't think that it's an exaggeration to say that we are feeling a bit of pressure to pick up our flag and plant it somewhere else. More and more our faith seems archaic to outsiders. It is exclusive in its claims. It's demands seem restrictive.

What's the answer to these accusations and slander? Do we move our flag and conform to the culture? Do we choose to white out some of our Bibles? Or do we pack up and move out to the middle of nowhere? None of these will do will they? Instead we keep on trusting in Jesus. We keep on proclaiming Him to a world that desperately NEEDS HIM!

And we dig deep roots. Holding fast to the truths that the Church has held to over the centuries. Stay in the Word of God. MORE THAN EVER you and I need to be clinging to the Word of God and devoting ourselves to prayer. Make this a top priority in your life. Realign your days so that you can give God your best as you read and pray. If you are a parent, prioritize devotions with your kids. Start these important and necessary habits in their life while they are young. Get an accountability partner if need be so that this becomes a habit that lasts for the rest of your life.

Let's resolve to believe and practice what the Bible calls us to even when we are mocked and maliciously accused for it. Make it a priority this year to be prepared for the tough questions that your lost family members and neighbours are already hinting at. Make it a priority to read and study about the issues confronting your children.

But the author of Hebrews adds one huge promise to this charge. In verse 23 he charges us to hold fast:

for he who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23 ESV)

For some of you, this little promise is all that you have been hanging onto these past two years. You've felt like your whole life has been hanging by a thread. And you're not crazy! We have been tested. We have been tried. And God would say keep going for I have got you!

God is faithful. And this charge to hold fast is not rooted in the hope that we can white knuckle our way to the end. It is rooted in the faithfulness of God to keep us to the end. As the apostle Paul said in Philippians:

⁶ And I am sure of this, **that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6 ESV)**

Dig deep knowing that God will keep you as you cling close to Him. He's holding you as you hang on to Him.

And fourthly, and deeply to connected to our resolve to dig deep, is the need for us to:

4. Resolve to Treasure Community

You and I can't hold fast to our hope without one another. We have learned that lesson big time over the past few years. I, Matt Szkarlat need the people of God in my life if I am going to hold fast without wavering. And so do you! And it has always been this way. Look with me to verse 24-25:

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25 ESV)

The author of Hebrews knew that these Christians would not make it if they abandoned their habit of gathering for worship. Or if they neglected the gift of grace which comes by being in tight community. In order to draw near to God, to hold your faith and hope unwaveringly, you need to remain in close community with the people of God. We can't do it alone nor were we ever made to!

I remember the first Sunday back at Cornerstone after the first lockdown. My whole face hurt from smiling so much! It wasn't just the emotion that comes from seeing people for the first time in a while, but it was the mutual edification, it was my faith being stirred up as we hummed along in music. As we heard the Word preached TOGETHER. As we shared of God's faithfulness amidst unstable times. Did you have a similar experience?

Martin Luther, the great reformer spoke this way of corporate worship:

At home in my own house there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through.³

How true is that!

The past few years have taught us the lesson that the author of Hebrews wanted us to learn: we need to resolve to treasure community.

³ Martin Luther as quoted by Robert G. Rayburn, *O Come, Let Us Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 29,30.

That looks like treasuring and blocking off Sunday morning for Church. It's imperative that we do this as a community. It's critical that we model this for the children and young people watching us. It looks like us *intentionally* developing friendships with our brothers and sisters here at Redeemer. It looks like those friendships leading to increased accountability.

It looks like you and I joining prayer groups. It looks like us circling Thursday nights on our calendar for 'Life Together.' It is us actively pursuing community with one another. Treasuring and guarding it.

And it looks like us reaching out to those who have been on the outside of community. Aiming to pull those in who have been left out or who have fallen through the cracks.

The author of Hebrews adds this line at the end of vs 25:

And all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:25b ESV)

That's his way of saying you need your Church family! Things will get harder before Jesus returns and one of the graces He has given you to remain steadfast is His Church. He purchased us with His very blood and has called us to live with one another. So don't neglect this necessary gift you have been given.

As we come to a conclusion this morning friends, I suspect for most of you this text along with its implications are not new. And that's good! Because there is no need to reinvent the wheel. God calls us to resolve to remember. Remember how he has made a sure and final way for us to be in right relationship with Him. It's by putting your faith in the work of Jesus Christ as He lived, died and rose in your place.

And God calls us to draw near and dig deep as we walk with Him. With boldness and confidence based on what He has done for us. And lastly, God calls us to treasure our Church family and to stay tightly knit.

Let's make this year a year in which we don't try to reinvent the wheel. Let's make this a year in which we simply cling to Jesus and His Word, resolve to be unwavering, and resolve to treasure one another. For the glory of God, and for the good of the Church and its witness. Thanks be to God!