

Resolved To Repent Quickly

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[0 : 00] Just briefly, by way of review, to resolve or not to resolve, that is the question we're dealing with, the place of resolution in the Christian life.

And we defined resolution as a firm decision, a strong determination on some course of action, either to take or not to take.

And we noted that it has to do with future action. So if I resolve, it's from here on out. I can look backward with regret, perhaps, but I can look forward with resolve.

So it's a pre-commitment, determining ahead of time. And we considered last week some of the reasons Christians may shy away from making resolutions.

And I trust that we answered those objections. Were there any objections that still are swirling in your head that we didn't address last week?

[1 : 02] I'm not going to take the time to review them. But I think one of the strongest arguments for resolution in the Christian life is all the examples of godly men and women in the scriptures who resolved.

Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the king's meat. Paul resolved to preach nothing but Christ and him crucified. Jesus resolved to go to Jerusalem and there lay down his life as a ransom for many.

David, Job, and others. And then we expanded our search in the Bible beyond just verses that use the word resolve or determined.

Do you remember the language of resolve? How does a resolved heart speak? What does it sound like? I will. I will.

So that's what we're looking at as well. Philip Bennett Power was a gospel minister in England during the middle 1800s. The same time as Spurgeon lived.

[2 : 11] And the Banner of Truth has republished one of his books, two of his books. But one of them is the I Wills of the Psalms. And it is subtitled, The Determinations of the Man of God as Found in Some of the I Wills of the Psalms.

In other words, he recognized that when the psalmist says, I will, he is making a resolution. He is resolved on some course of action.

And so much then for our review of the general introduction to resolutions from last week. Today we come to the first of several specific resolutions found in God's word that we will be examining.

Turn to Psalm 119. Brother Roger counted 26 times in this psalm that the psalmist says, I will, I shall. We're going to look at one of those.

Psalm 119 and verse 60 is our text for today. Where he says, I will hasten and not delay to keep your commandments.

[3 : 27] Your commands. Now, I want to back up a verse. Not all these verses flow in the sense of building on each other.

Yes, there is that. Sometimes there's just a command, or not a command, but a verse that stands somewhat on its own. But I think the connection between verse 59 and verse 60 is so close that if we're to understand verse 60, we need to see its connection to verse 59.

And so let me read those two together. Verse 59 and 60. I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes.

I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands. Now, these two verses go together. Notice the structure of this pair.

Verse 59 looks which direction? Forward or backward? Backward. Backward. I have. I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes.

[4 : 31] That's something I've done in the past. Now, which direction does verse 60 point? Forward. Forwards. I will hasten to and not delay to obey your commands.

So here's the resolve of the godly man. I will hasten and not to obey to keep your commands. And that resolve to keep God's commands is found over a dozen times in this chapter of Psalm 119. Charles Bridges, in his commentary on 119, says at this point that the psalmist's determination to keep God's word was not a hasty impulse, but a considerate resolve.

But a considerate resolve. The result of much thinking on his former ways of sin and folly. I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes.

I will hasten and not delay. So he's saying that it wasn't just something made on the whim, on a hasty impulse, but it was a considerate resolve.

[5 : 40] He sat down and thought and made this resolution. So we'll look at verse 59 and then on to verse 60.

This is something the godly man did in his past. And indeed it's something we did when we were first converted. When we were born again, we were awakened as from the sleep of death, weren't we?

We'd been dead toward God and suddenly we were awakened and we were given eyes to see things that we had never seen before. And we came to our senses and we asked with alarm, what have I been doing with my life?

We considered our ways and we realized that our ways were not God's ways. We hadn't given much thought to that before, but in conversion that became the predominant thought that my ways are not God's ways.

And I'm in trouble. Oh, what a fool I've been that my ways would be contrary to God's ways. I'm justly condemned. And so we confessed and sought his pardon through Jesus and his cross.

[6 : 47] But the rest of the verse tells us that we do something more. We did something more than just consider our ways. What else did we do? We have turned our steps.

So as he's looking back, he says, we have considered our ways and we have turned. I have turned my steps to your statutes. Now, this turning is what the Bible calls in other places repenting.

To turn is to repent. As we consider our ways, we see that our ways are not God's ways. We've gone this way when God's way is that way.

And so having considered that and realized it, we then do an about face. We turn away from our way and repudiate them and turn our feet into God's ways.

I want to ask you, is conversion the last time that we have done these things in verse 59? Or have any of you been found meddling in a couple of these things since then?

[7 : 50] I don't say meddling tongue-in-cheek. We do this all the way home, don't we? We consider our ways. And as we consider our ways, wherever we see that our ways have gotten out of line with God's ways, we then turn and return to God's ways.

That's repentance. And it's the ongoing grace in the Christian life, just as much as faith is an ongoing grace, that we continually look to Christ. With our sin, we come and we trust afresh in his blood to atone for it, to forgive it, but also to empower us to walk the new way.

So it's more than just an occasional glance toward God's commands and toward considering our ways.

But we're told above all things to guard our hearts, to keep a close watch upon our ways. Now, when are the special times when we do this, when we consider our ways?

When does that happen in your life? Let's name four or five times in your life that this might happen. When do you consider your ways? Anybody?

[9 : 07] Anybody? Shirley? When I can't sleep. When you're born again, I would say. Okay, we just talked about when we're born again. We considered it then. That's right. And I'm talking now more in the terms of the ongoing consideration.

Stan says when you can't sleep at night. So there are times when we lie in our beds and we're thinking about our ways. When else does it happen? Billy? Test and trial.

Okay. Trials can cause us to stop and think, can't they? In a way that when we're on the run and rolling, we may not be thinking and considering our ways.

When else do we consider our ways? Roger? Did you get a reaction from your wife? What did I do? What did I say now? When you are rebuked.

When other people around you call your attention to your way. Well, then we consider. What did I do? What did I say? What didn't I do? When else?

[10:09] Steve? Studying under the preaching of God's word. So when you're hearing the word of God preached. And that could encompass a lot of things, couldn't it?

So it's when you sit down with God's word tomorrow and you're reading of God's ways that there's to be this consideration. Now, I just read about God's ways and his coming.

How are my ways lining up with that? And so there's many times in our lives as Christians when we ought to be considering our ways.

When we prepare for the Lord's Supper. Are there people in my life that I am bitter toward and I'm not right? Christian brothers in this congregation where I am to come and to eat and partake of the Lord's table together.

As a confession that we are one in Jesus Christ. There are times in our lives when we especially consider our ways.

[11:09] So the point is, is that whenever that is, and it can be happening at any time in our lives. Whenever we come to see that, oh, my ways have slipped out of line with God's ways.

That's a critical point in our life. What would we do at that point when we see that? Verse 60 tells us that just as often as we consider our ways and turn back to God's commands.

So we just as often must resolve that going forward from here on we will walk in his ways.

That's what we have in verse 60 then. And it is this future resolve. Having considered, having turned, I now resolve. I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands.

I've been meddling around over here. I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands. Now that's part of repentance. The whole complex, the whole process of repentance involves this resolve to walk in God's ways.

[12:17] The 1689 Confession of Faith has an excellent chapter on repentance unto life and salvation. Chapter 15. And it pulls together into just a few paragraphs what the Bible teaches on repentance.

Paragraph 3 speaks about this resolve. I'm not going to read the whole paragraph. It talks of repentance that leads to salvation as being a gospel grace.

And it leads to humbling ourselves and faith in Christ. But it is accompanied by prayer for pardon and strength of grace.

So pardon and power and also by a purpose. A purpose and endeavor in the power supplied by the Spirit to conduct himself in the sight of God with a consistency of life that pleases him.

So part of the process of repentance when we see that we've drifted from the right way is to turn and repudiate our way and to turn our steps and to hasten to resolve that I will.

[13:27] This point going forward, I will walk in your ways. I will obey. There's this purpose, this determination, this resolving to walk in his ways.

We see it clearly in the prodigal son. There he is. He's gone far from his father's house. And he's in the far country. And it's there that God brings him to his senses.

And when he came to his senses, this is conversion. This is awakening. This is wake up, man, to where you're at and what your ways are in God's sight. And when he came to his senses, he resolved, I will arise and go to my father.

Do you hear the resolution in that? The determination? I see where I've been. I see where I ought to be. I will arise and go to my father. And he arose and came to his father.

Resolve was followed by action. It was immediately followed by action. I will arise and go. And he arose and came. And that's what the psalmist is saying here.

[14:36] I have considered my ways. I have turned my feet. And I will hasten and not delay to keep your commands. So the grace of repentance includes this resolve to live differently from here going forward.

And it's a lack of this resolve that exposes so much of what is thought in evangelical circles to be repentance that is not repentance at all unto life. I call it confessional booth living.

And it can be in the Roman Catholic denomination. It can be in Protestant denominations where the guy sins up a storm all week.

He goes into the confessional. He confesses. He says some things. Never intending, never purposing to leave his sin, to change his behavior, but just taking care of it at the confessional.

Just taking care of it by coming to the Protestant service. Just confessing it and that's it. Well, that's not repentance unto life. That's the sorrow of the world that leads to death.

[15:40] And what it's lacking is this resolve, you see. That in confessing our sins, we are agreeing with God about our behavior. That it's wicked. It's totally unfitting for me, a child of God.

And so from here on, Father, I'm resolving to follow your way. And to do so with quickness. This is the resolve that's included in the call of Christ in the gospel.

That if anyone would come after me. If you're just even at the point of thinking about following me, you need to realize three things. You must deny yourself. Take up your cross.

And follow me. Now, as you're thinking about following Christ, you must determine then, yes, I've been not following him, but going my way. I will.

I will. I will deny myself. I'll take up the cross. And I will follow you, Lord Jesus, by your grace.

Below. So, there's the resolve, you see, in the repentance that is unto life.

[16:39] It's a pre-commitment that we make public in our baptism. We are showing our resolve to no longer belong to the world and to live its way. But to be a disciple of Jesus and to identify with him in our life, our heart, our faith.

So, when the considering of our way reveals our steps are out of God's way, the resolution of verse 60 is critical.

I will hasten and not delay to keep your commands. Notice the resolve is made in both a positive and a negative way. First, the positive, I will hasten to keep your commands.

We don't use that word often, hasten. We're going to sing it, Lord willing, very soon, but hasten means hurry, doesn't it? I will hurry. I will do it quickly.

I will obey right away. We taught our children that song. I will obey the first time I'm told. I will obey right away. Never asking why. Never with a sigh.

[17:41] I will obey right away. That's the resolve here. I will hasten to obey your commands. I will obey right away. I will hurry to obey.

But then the same resolve is stated in negative terms. I will not delay to keep your commands. I'll not dawdle. I'll not drag my feet.

I'll not lollygag and linger. Now, delay can be dangerous, even deadly. When the hand grenade has been tossed into your vehicle, delay is deadly.

When the policeman says stop or I'll shoot, to delay is deadly. When the fast-growing cancerous tumor has been found, delay is deadly.

But never is delay so deadly as when we find ourselves walking contrary to God's commands. Then, to delay is deadly.

[18:45] And I'd like for us in the time remaining this morning to consider that. Why is it dangerous to delay? Why this emphasis on hurry? Why, when we see that we've been walking contrary to God's way in some area of our life, that we must hurry to get back into the right way?

That's the emphasis, and it's made twice, positively, negatively. I'll hurry. I won't delay. Let's, again, just put it all on the table first, and then we'll go more deeply with some of these reasons.

What comes to your mind? Why is the psalmist so committed to not just turning his feet toward God's commands, but then to run and to hurry to obey?

Why is that? Becky? I think that we know we only have the breath we have. Mm. And we don't know what we have after that.

So time is short. We have this breath, and we can't presume on tomorrow. Good.

[19:49] What else? It gets worse. Cancer grows. Mm. Okay. Okay. Sin and temptation is like that cancer, and it doesn't just stay static, but it grows with delay.

All right? Excellent. Well, look at that. Scott? I've got to go along with that. The longer you are on the road, it's harder. Habits are formed, and it's harder to break the longer you are. Have you found that?

Just in anything. Even non-sinful behaviors. The more you repeat something, the more it gets like a groove on a record, and it's harder for the needle to get out of it. Repetition tends to give a habitual nature to sin.

And so it's harder to break out of that the longer we stay in it. Mark? Delay is comfortable for the flesh. Eating the flesh.

Good. Paul says, don't make any. What is the word?

[21 : 01] Romans 13? Make no provision for the flesh. And J. Adams gives a loose translation or paraphrase. Don't buy groceries for the flesh.

So if you're wanting to starve the flesh and starve out some sin in your life, don't be buying groceries for it. Because delay does that. It's giving more time and more food to that sin.

So, yes, it's feeding the flesh rather than starving it when we delay. Anything else? Hardness of heart develops the longer we stay in our sinful behavior.

Jason? Living in sin is living out of fellowship with God. Why would I want to do that longer than I have to? The loss of fellowship with our God.

Anything else? Well, let's go back through these and look at them one at a time.

[22 : 02] I'd like to speak first of the enslaving power of sin. Why should we hurry back into the right way? Because of the enslaving power of sin. What is sin after?

What is its goal? James tells us, James 1.15, sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. So sin's got a name in your life and it wants to bring you down to death.

That's why the Puritan John Owen said, you must be killing sin or it will be killing you. Because it's aiming for death. So you must kill it before it kills you.

Romans 8.13, Paul says, if through the spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. But the question is, is when should you put them to death? When should?

Right away. Without delay. When is it easiest to kill sin? Upon its first rising? Or after it's continued for a while?

[23 : 02] When is it easiest to kill a poisonous snake? Before it is fully hatched and it's just poking through the shell? Or after you fed it for a year? When is it easiest to put out a fire?

When the sparks have just started aflame? Or after two acres are burning? You see, in all these illustrations, we see that sin, as someone says, will always take you further than you want it to go.

And it will keep you there longer than you want it to stay. Sin, if you're to defeat it, will never be easier to defeat than right now. And that's the reality that we all live in.

My struggles with sin will never be easier than dealing with them now. Because if I lollygag another day, it will simply strengthen it rather than weaken it. So, here's the urgency.

No delay. It gains power. Like a snowball rolling downhill. It gains speed and weight. So, to delay is deadly.

[24 : 08] If you ever plan on stopping that snowball from taking you down to where it wants to go, death, you better nip it in the bud. You better stop it early.

So, let's think about what we see in the Bible on this score. Think of Eve in dealing with the devil and his temptation in the garden. She did not hurry to obey.

She delayed, and her delay proved deadly. What we find in Genesis 3 is that Eve entered into dialogue with the devil rather than firmly rejecting his first suggestion.

Hastening to obey. You know, the devil's far better at negotiating than we ever are. He'll always come out on top if you negotiate with the devil.

No one can deal with him and come out ahead. He's too wily. He's too deceitful. And even Jesus Christ refused to enter into dialogue with Satan.

[25 : 11] You see him in the wilderness temptation. Instead, he firmly resisted him at once. And he punctuated it, his no, with a scripture.

It is written. He slammed the door on Satan's temptation. Case closed. End of discussion. Even before discussion is allowed to take part.

Get behind me, Satan. I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands. James 4 and verse 7 calls us not to reason with the devil, but to resist the devil.

And he will flee from you. So at the very first rising of temptation, the very first thought in your head of some temptation to sin, slam the door in his face. Hasten. Hurry to obey and to reject.

The temptation. Resist him standing firm in the faith, Peter says. How about David when he's on his rooftop and his eyes first lit upon the bathing Bathsheba?

[26 : 18] There she was. There is safety only in immediately bouncing his eyes away and getting down from his rooftop where he could no longer steal a second glance. That's the only safety for David.

But he didn't take the hurried step. He delayed. And he looked again. And he lingered until his lust moved him to adultery.

And so he found that by delaying, his lust was strengthened, wasn't it?

It didn't just stay the same. It rather just took him further down the slide and was indeed overpowering to him. So it was the same with his covering of his sin. Once he had sinned, he should have immediately considered his way and turned his feet and hurried back. But instead, he's now trying to cover. How can I cover this?
[27 : 16] You see, that's just another way of delaying. Whatever keeps us from getting back to the cross and trusting in Christ and turning our way back to him, it's part of the delay game. And Satan always wins the delay game.

I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands. There we see the sin enslaving power. And right along with it is the hardening or deceiving power of sin. Sin not only enslaves, it hardens and it deceives. That's the very danger for which the book of Hebrews was written, that these recipients, their hearts were growing hard. And he warns them against them. And he charges the church to see to it that no one has in them a deceitful heart that will lead them astray. And they're rather to encourage one another daily, lest they be deceived and led astray and hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. And he says, today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. Which is what we do whenever we linger in sin. We are hardening our hearts against the call of God, come to me, come back to me.

[28 : 29] So sin can harden our hearts. It can build a callus over our conscience. Some of you know, first thing in the spring, you go out and grab the shovel and start digging in the garden.

And every day you're just adding another layer of callus, aren't you? And eventually that thing is so thick, you can poke it with a needle, you can pinch it, and you don't feel anything. And our consciences can get that way.

When we delay, harden not your heart. Today is the day of repentance and salvation. Lest your heart be hardened, lest it become calloused, where it doesn't respond to the pricks of conscience. And conscience can even be cauterized and seared. Somebody finished what James has to say about the deceiving power of sin.

He says in James 1, 22, Do not be hearers only, but be... Right, I heard it.

[29 : 32] Something about deceived, isn't there? So it's not just be doers of the word and not hearers only, and so that you will not deceive yourself. You see, that's the thing about sin.

We can hear the Bible, we can be in church, we can read the Bible daily, and we can be deceiving ourselves, thinking that I'm better off for having been in church today because I heard the word. But until I'm doing the word, I'm deceiving myself if I think I'm any better off for having heard it.

A story is told of a man who one Sunday attended worship by himself, and upon arriving home earlier than usual, his wife asked him, Is all done?

No, he replied, All is said, but all is not done. And that's how we leave this place, isn't it? We leave with everything having been said, but not everything having been done.

And that's a critical point between hearing and doing. We want to keep that space as short as possible. That's what the psalmist is saying. I'll hurry.

[30 : 38] I'll hurry. Why? Because as long as the seed is just laying there on the path, what's the danger? Satan comes and snatches the seed and carries it away.

And that's the period here of when we hear the word and before we put it into practice, before we resolve to obey and then do put it into practice.

So we want to shrink that time. I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands because of sin's deceitfulness and its hardening power. Just briefly, I want to speak of sin's profaning power.

This is something I saw in my last reading through the book of Ezekiel. God is saying to his people, Your God is holy, so you be holy. But when you turned your back on me and went your own way, you still bore my name.

You were the Israel of God. And you profaned my name among the nations. You drug my name down through the mud. People said, That's the people of Jehovah.

[31 : 45] There they are. And where were they? They were in a fallen state. God had had to judge them for their sin. And so they were just pitiful, wretched. And wherever they went.

They were a poor advertisement for their God. They profaned his name. And you find that, especially in Ezekiel chapter 20. And he says, I'm going to take them into the desert of the nations and purge them from their idolatry.

And afterwards you will listen to me and no longer profane my holy name with your gifts and idols. So God was serious about his name not being profaned. And any child of God certainly has something of a desire for the name of God to be hallowed.

That's part of our prayer, isn't it? It's the way that Jesus says every disciple should pray. Hallowed be your name. May your name be lifted high and kept reverent and exalted.

And we cannot, bearing his name, just go on in our sin, lingering in our sin, without profaning his name. Dragging it down.

[32 : 48] Treating it as a common thing. As if God were no one. Rather, that's a misuse of the name of the Lord our God. That's one of the ways we break the third commandment. And so Paul says in 2 Timothy 2.19, everyone who confesses the name of the Lord our God.

Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness. Because that speaks well of him. Our God's holy. That's why we live holy. But when we delay in sin, we act as if our God is not holy.

And it profanes his name before men. Then there's the discipline inviting power of sin. And fourthly, to delay repentance, to keep walking in sin, is to invite our Heavenly Father's discipline, isn't it?

And here it's Hebrews 12. That the Lord disciplines those he loves and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. And so our Father loves us too much to leave us wandering on in our sin without disciplining us.

And if a word of warning will not bring us back, he has a rod of discipline. And what does he say about that discipline? Painful. Painful. It's not pleasant, but painful.

[34 : 01] And that's one reason to hasten and not to delay. I don't want to invite the discipline of my Heavenly Father. His hand can be very heavy upon us as you read in Psalm 32, Psalm 38, Psalm 51.

Sapping our strength and joy in life. Destroying our peace. Destroying the joy of our salvation. He doesn't willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men, but he will as necessary with his children.

Because he's lovingly committed to us and our holiness. Well, that's another reason to hurry. And lastly, just the interrupting power of sin.

Sin that we remain in has a power to disrupt the fellowship. This is what Pastor Jason was referring to. That can be the sorest thing to the child of God. To one who knows what it is to have intimate fellowship with Jesus.

To live with him all the day long. To have a cloud come between him and the Savior. Oh, that's the worst of life's possibilities. And that's what was happening with Israel.

[35 : 13] Their prayers were being hindered. God was hiding his face from them. Why? Not because his ear couldn't hear their prayers. Not because his arm was too short.

He couldn't do anything about their prayers. But he says, your iniquities have separated you from your God. They've come like a cloud between the sun and the earth. And it's separated you.

And your sins have hidden his face from you. So you're not enjoying the smile of his face. Rather, your father has that frown of son, daughter, turn.

Come back to me. Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall. And it's the father's displeasure that hinders this fellowship. And no small part of the peace and joy of the Christian is to know there's nothing between my soul and the Savior.

You know that hymn? Nothing between. It's open. It's wonderful fellowship. And that's what we don't want to miss.

[36 : 13] And we do when we linger in sin. John Samus had it right. But we never can prove the delights of his love until all on the altar we lay.

For the pleasure he shows and the joy he bestows are for those who will trust and obey. And while we're not walking in obedience and while we're backsliding, that joy and peace and fellowship with him is hindered.

Just as it is when something's wrong in your marriage, in your earthly relationship. So with our blessed heavenly father. It's one of the highest blessings in the Aaronic blessing to have the Lord make his face shine upon us.

And to turn his face toward us. And it's one of the most painful things to have the Lord turn his face against us. And to discipline us. To have his frown rather than his smile.

So many reasons to hasten and not delay. Most of you know the common proverb that haste makes waste. Usually haste is not good.

[37 : 18] But this is one exception to the rule. It's always good to hurry. To hurry in the ways of God. The faster the better. I will hasten. And not delay to obey your commands.

We're dismissed. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.