

Resolved to Pray

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Date: 29 January 2018

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[0 : 00] What is the place of resolution in the Christian life? We began it on the, I believe it was the 1st of January,! or at least the first Sunday in January, and we're continuing in this study.

We've seen three resolutions so far. Say them with me. I will obey, I will trust, and I will testify. And those were three resolutions, not written by Jonathan Edwards, not written by me or anyone of us, but written by the man of God in the book of Psalms, and most fully expressive of the man of God, Jesus Christ, in his heart.

These are the kinds of things that he resolved as he walked among us as a man, just as we are tempted in every way as we are. So we're using P.B. Power's book, The I Will's of the Psalms, places in the Psalms that say, I will, and showing that determination, that firm decision, that resolve to live this way.

And Mr. Power introduces the next resolution by drawing attention to his mid, the attention of his mid-19th century hearers to the way that man has excitedly laid hold of the mighty powers of God that he has put at our disposal in his universe.

Many new inventions and discoveries were coming to light in the mid-1900s, inventions that take God's power and made use of it.

[1 : 44] So he speaks of steam and how men have laid hold of this power of God at their disposal of steam to do the work in factories of a thousand hands to move trains quickly across the land.

We've laid hold of the power of God in electricity to send messages all over the globe. We've laid hold of the power of God in chloroform to take the edge off of pain.

And he noted how in all these ways, men were excited and enthusiastic and eager to lay hold of the mighty powers that God had put within our reach.

I wonder what Mr. Power would think today if he would visit our earth and see just what man has laid hold of in these various areas of God's power in electricity, in atoms, in hydrogen, in solar, chemicals, drugs.

Man has come a long way in laying hold of God's power that he's put within our reach. But then our author marvels at the little interest and the widespread neglect of God's almighty power that he's put within man's reach through prayer.

[2 : 59] He asks, is this not the reason that the prevailing aspect of God's people today is one of despondency? That when the pressures of the world and difficulties present themselves to us, we have a despair.

He says that surely much of this is due to our neglect of the mighty power of God put at our disposal through believing prayer. Here in believing prayer, we have the key of heaven's treasure.

We have the lever of heaven's strength. And with this, we might instead be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

And he goes on, we would be prepared for great deeds both of action and resistance in the spiritual life. We would never dream of failure. We would never miss real success.

The Lord give you, dear reader, power in prayer. And with that, he introduces the next resolve of the psalmist. I will pray.

[4 : 03] I will pray. Now, Power's book has 21 chapters in it and nine of those chapters are devoted to this I will of prayer.

I think that's Mr. Power's own way of saying here is a resolution, Christian, you will not want to overlook. So, let's just turn up two texts in the Psalms and we'll return to them later in our study.

But to begin with, Psalm 86 and verse 7. In the day of my trouble, I will call to you for you will answer me.

Can you hear David's firm resolve in that verse? In the day of my trouble, I will, I will call to you.

Now, what so easily happens to you in the day of your trouble that might keep you from turning to God and believing prayer? Or, if not completely keep you from it, make it, delay it and make it one of the last things that you do perhaps after you've done many other things.

[5 : 23] What is it about the day of trouble that that makes it necessary for us to resolve to pray in that time?

What is it that that would pull you away from prayer in the day of trouble? What are some of the things? Unbelief? Anger?

The circumstances, the trouble that's coming? I'm sorry? Is it over here? Looking to ourselves?

I've got to deal with this trouble and get myself out. There's another voice. I said to try to fix it ourselves. Okay. Yeah. We look to ourselves first.

Don't we find in the day of trouble that sometimes we are the most indisposed to pray then than we are any time? And so, that means that if I'm to pray in the day of trouble that I better resolve before I get there, I will call on the name of the Lord.

[6 : 28] And you see what drives that. For you will answer me. And we'll look deeper at these verses. But I just want you to see now the need for resolution in prayer and the resolve that we find in the psalmist's heart to pray.

So, the other text, Psalm 116. Again, we'll come back to these texts Lord willing next week. But, Psalm 116.

And, let's see the resolve of the psalmist here. The first two verses. I love the Lord for He heard my voice. He heard my cry for mercy because He turned His ear to me.

I will call on Him as long as I live. His resolve is clear. I have called on Him. He has answered me.

So, I will call on Him in every future day that I have. I will call on Him as long as I live. And we can see what brought Him to this fresh resolve was a whole peck of problems and He talks about it in verse 3 and 4 and 6 throughout the psalm.

[7 : 42] We'll look at that at another time. So, here's just two passages in the Psalms where we hear the psalmist resolving to pray. Now, Mr. Powers would encourage us with the power that God has put at our disposal through prayer by taking us right away to the issue of examples in the scriptures of what has been accomplished through the power of prayer.

What kind of power does prayer have? So, let's just brainstorm for a few minutes and think of what do we know in the scriptures that reveals the power of prayer?

What has been done through prayer? To transcend our own understanding? It goes beyond us? It's supernatural stuff?

Like what? What do we see in the Bible? Give me some examples. The dead were raised. Elisha, Elijah prayed and God raised up the dead.

Jesus called forth Lazarus from the dead. But by prayer, that's right. What else has been done by prayer that shows its power?

[9 : 02] The sun didn't set. Okay, the sun didn't set as they held their hands up in prayer to God in the midst of the battle up on the hill and down in the fight.

The Lord helped his people and at one time he actually held up the sun so that they could have enough time to demolish their enemies. So, that raises a whole group of things we've seen done.

We have seen in the Bible many battles won through prayer, haven't we? When God's people were outnumbered and outpowered, prayer made the difference.

What else did we see in the Bible that shows the power of God that's put in man's disposal by prayer? Mark? It did not rain and then it did rain Elijah prayed.

Alright. Stands for itself, doesn't? The power. This may not be as specific but it seems to unify believers in the church or even today and they unify their students.

[10 : 11] Amen. We see Paul praying for that and the Lord answering that prayer in the churches that he had on his heart. Prayed for their unity.

What other feats? Animals Animals! Okay. I don't know that that was done in answer to prayer but that's surely one of God's demonstration of power to make the ass of Balaam speak.

But some other examples of prayer where it was a petition to God and his power did things. I saw a hand. Yes, Amber. The apostles were praying for Peter and he was free from prison and then they didn't believe it.

Okay. Good. There we see a church all night church prayer meeting and God opens prison doors and drops off chains and sets his servant Peter free.

I think that there's reason to believe that Jonah was swallowed by a whale in answer to prayer as he was sinking Jonah chapter 2 and then spewed out on dry land.

[11 : 24] Any others come to your mind? Paul and Silas praying and singing and down the earthquake and the conversion and the whole family. Amen.

Nehemiah before King Artaxerxes! all the plagues and you can go back and read them and Moses was given to appeal to God to end those plagues all the frogs and the locusts and all these things and Moses goes and prays to God and the Lord takes away the plagues.

his power Zacharias received a son from his old wife Elizabeth who was barren in answer to his prayer.

The Israelites restored to the land from all the nations where they had been driven in answer to their prayers. The Lord got a wife for Abraham's son in answer to his servants prayers.

Lord lead me to the wife for my master's son. So we've seen the hungry fed, the sick healed, people saved since then too, the church of God advanced, protected, unified, guided.

[12 : 52] And what power wants us to see is the way that God has linked his power to our prayers. And have we not seen the same in our own temptations?

We've seen power to overcome temptation. To say no to sin. We've seen sin forgiven in answer to our confessional prayers, prayers of confession. We've seen love and joy and peace, given patience, kindness, goodness, impossible things done, people saved.

And in short, prayer can do what God can do. Because prayer lays hold of God in all of his power and brings him into the situation and he acts on our behalf.

So James says that the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Powerful because it accesses God's power. So again, power wants, PB power wants us to see that as men have gone after laying hold of God's power in the very many different ways in terms of industry and invention and medicine, he says we ought to be doing exactly the same thing in prayer, in the whole spiritual arena.

And so he says, is it not wonderful? By which he means, is it not full of wonder that although we know all this, we often have to drag ourselves to prayer and feel listless and heartless when we're on our knees.

[14 : 25] We see what can be done through prayer and yet we have to drag ourselves to prayer, he says. Strange, wonder, amazing thing to behold.

And so the man of God in the Psalms finds that he has many reasons to resolve. I will pray. The clear implication being that without that resolve to pray, we would pray a lot less than we do.

And so with us, is that not true that unless we resolve to pray, we will probably not pray as much as we ought. So I want us just to again brainstorm a moment here.

You've already touched on it in the earlier question I gave you, but I want us to think of why we need to resolve to pray. And let's get them all out on the table and then we're just going to go through.

I think power gives some six reasons and I've come up with some more. You will come up with others. Let's just think together. Why do we need resolve to pray?

[15 : 30] What is it about prayer? What is it about trouble? What is it about life that we don't just trip into the situation and know that we're going to pray?

No, it takes some real firm determination and resolve. What is it? What is it with you, with Christians in general? Roger?

Good.

Same prayers over and over. I would ask for a show of hands if you've had to pray about something more than three times. Okay.

Maybe I should ask for a show of hands for those that haven't had to. We all are in that boat, aren't we? And that can become very discouraging and so we can easily quit. Unless we resolve to pray on, like we'll find the psalmist, evening, morning, and at noon, I will pray.

[16 : 34] I will persist. I will continue in prayer. And yes, that can be a reason we need resolve because we keep asking and we don't see the answers to our prayers.

What's another reason? Yes? I didn't think that I am more capable than I really am. There's that self-confidence. I think I can handle this one.

I've got this, Lord, and we just plow into it and think we can come up with the solution so we don't sense our need. And good. What else?

Yes, in the back. God? The flesh is weak. The flesh is weak. The last thing it wants to do. The flesh is weak.

Pride. Pride. That feeds into our lack of prayer as well because prayer is humbling ourselves, isn't it? And so pride, again, that we can handle this or we don't need God.

[17 : 37] Those are proud thoughts. What else, Mike? In what ways? Okay.

Doubt. And as someone said earlier, unbelief. And that can work in two ways. It can work saying, well, I doubt that God is able. But what else might we doubt?

That He is willing. And doubt can kill us either way. I don't think God is able to really fix this problem in my life. But probably with us, more often it's I doubt that God would be willing to do this for me.

And so we don't pray. What else? Rex? Don't want to bother God with that little thing.

Ever had that birdie whispered in your ear? It smells of hell. That's what we're going to see where that one comes from. But it's exactly true. Oh, well, I asked Jesus to save me from hell and from my sin, but can I bother him with this flat tire, with this disappointment, and this need in our family.

[18 : 52] It's so small and so earthly minded. Don't bother God with the little things. What else? God? I'm lazy and prayer takes mental focus and discipline in its heart.

So again, our laziness. The flesh is weak and one way it's weak is we're lazy and we don't like the hard work of prayer. And prayer can be very hard work. Good.

Another one. Jean? So a lack of closeness to God.

To really feel in our hearts that I have a father in heaven who loves me and delights to give good gifts to his children. And just like a little girl with a skinned up knee comes in to mommy and says, mommy, I've got a problem, I've got a boo-boo, help me, and looks for sympathy and support and whatever is needed.

So if we were that close to God, we too would just be coming all the time to him just like a little girl does to its mother or father. So a lack of closeness.

[20 : 05] There was a hand over here. Roger. We like wisdom or understanding circumstances of daily life. We need to look out so that he'll give us everything.

Okay, from James 1. In the midst, a chapter begins there. We're to count it all joy and all the trials of life and trials uncover our lack of wisdom.

And it is the greatest wisdom to go with our lack of wisdom to the God who's promised to give it. And so we need wisdom and need to resolve to seek it out from the place where it's to be found.

What else makes resolve so necessary because of some difficulty in prayer? Stan? Sometimes I think knowing that God is sovereign probably falls under unbelief and doubt but what does it matter anyway?

Is my prayer really going to be effective? Just move on. I've got other things to do. God will work out his plan anyway. Okay, you Calvinists, you believe that everything was decreed from the beginning of the world, then why pray?

[21 : 26] Why pray? Yeah, that's a real hang-up and the devil would shut down our prayers. And what would he use to do it? A truth of God? Press too hard, he'd shove you off the road into some ditch on the other side of the road and you'd forget all the verses that do tell us.

You have not. Why? Not because I didn't decree it, but because you didn't ask. You have not because you asked not. So, exactly, the sovereignty of God can become in the hands of Satan a tool to keep us from praying.

Don't forget, Satan used the Bible to tempt Jesus, didn't he? Is it not written that the angels will catch you? He's quoting Psalm 91, so jump off.

And Satan will use the truth of the sovereignty of God. Does prayer really change things? No, we're not saying by that it changes God's decree, but it's saying that the decree that God determined before the foundation of the world, one of the means of fulfilling that decree is your prayer.

prayer. And so, again, these things can become hindrances. Anything else? Yes, Steve? I'm afraid that God will answer no.

[22 : 49] Thinking back of the child example of how many times I tell my son no, and he just keeps coming back and asking over and over. Maybe the answer has been no, and so you quit coming.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that the no answer is for good. It might mean wait. No, not today, but pray on. Good. Anything else? Yes, Dale, and then Sharon.

Pardon? The urgency of the matter, the importance that it needs to be prayed for because it's vital. A person's salvation. So why do we need to resolve?

Because of the urgency of what we're talking about. We're not just talking about we'd like a purple sports car rather than a black one. We're talking about people's eternal destiny.

Surely, whatever, the cause of God's glory on the earth, these are important, urgent things that would well deserve to resolve, to pray for these things and then Sharon.

[23 : 57] I find it hard to pray just with life and lack of sleep. Good. Just life can make it hard. Have any of you found that when you're sick you don't feel like praying as well?

Sickness can indispose you to prayer? Well, you can just give in to it or you can resolve if ever I need to pray it's now. So I don't feel close to God, so I guess I won't pray.

If ever you need to pray, it's when you don't feel close to God. So again, we're seeing these things can become hindrances to prayer and just we don't want to give in to them.

Well, what's the answer then to not give in to them? Well, the psalmist is saying resolve to pray in those circumstances. I will call on the Lord for he will answer me.

I will call on the Lord as long as I live because he has answered me. So, many, many things. Thank you for sharing those things. We could probably list others as well.

[25 : 02] I want us to come back then and begin to just think in the time remaining, we won't get finished today, but what are some of the difficulties that make this resolve necessary in the Christian life.

The first is indwelling sin's backwardness to pray. The flesh. There is a part of me that doesn't want to pray.

It didn't want to pray the day I got saved. It did not want me to come and confess to God and to ask him to save me. It didn't want to. And it still doesn't want to pray any more than it did that day.

That part of me is called my flesh. It once reigned in me. It once controlled me. It once determined what I would and would not do. And so the flesh is an anti-God principle within.

Indwelling sin is just that. It dwells inside us. There's this principle of sin within is against God.

[26 : 12] If God's for it the flesh is against it. If God's against it the flesh is for it. And one thing God is for is prayer. And so we can expect to find that we will have this backwardness to pray as long as we live in this world because we carry our flesh with us all the way to our last breath.

And that's what makes heaven glory to the Christian then it will be shed. Then I will have no more of this sinful principle within. I trust you're familiar with that passage in Romans 7.

The holy apostle Paul felt this inward battle. Whenever he would pray and whenever he set himself to do something that was good and he says I find this law at work this principle at work in me.

It's not a dead principle. It's a living thing perspective. And here's that principle that when I want to do good evil is right there with me.

It's not far off. It's with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law. But I see another law at work in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind.

[27 : 33] And so Paul is confessing that he has these two active principles at work God has new desires. when he sees a command of God that comes to him from God's word coming from outside of him he finds in his own heart in his own mind a desire your word says seek my face and my heart says your face Lord will I seek there's an echo in his heart to every command of God that's that's the spirit having put a new heart in him but he says that's not the only active principle I find in me I also find that beside this your face Lord I will seek I find this other active principle that says that's the last thing I want to do to seek your face so Paul is saying we have these contrary principles within inner delight in God and his ways inner disinterest and disgust with God and his ways the flesh warring against and resisting every good desire and effort that we have to do now does this not explain a whole lot in our lives just getting hold of this does it not explain that inward reluctance to prayer that backwardness we feel why is power says we got to drag ourselves to pray so

I was feeling fine when I was watching that movie and yet when I finished the movie and went to pray all of a sudden I got tired and all of a sudden I started thinking of a thousand other things to do and I didn't feel like praying this is why we must resolve to pray there are times when as our author says it takes holy violence to bring ourselves to pray in earnest and did not Jesus tell his sleepy disciples in Gethsemane watch and pray for the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak so how can this help us well let's not let our feelings control whether or not we pray this is why resolve is so critical I will pray regardless of how I feel about prayer at the moment even when I feel the greatest reluctance and sluggishness to pray and when I feel that

I can identify it God's told me about oh this is that struggle with the flesh ah I see I don't want to give in to the flesh so I will pray and you put your resolve right on the throat of your feelings of the flesh and refuse to cave into them to let dull and heavy and distracted hearts keep you from prayer you press through with resolve crying for the help of the spirit to move to move your heart with sincere desires after God you know prayer is a supernatural thing now saying your prayers there's nothing supernatural about that but praying is a supernatural thing it's it's God by his spirit moving our hearts desires to seek him prayer is the heart sincere desire laid before God we don't have those in my flesh dwells no good thing so where do they come from they come from

God's spirit so that's the first thing we need the spirit to overcome the inertia of the flesh he teaches rebel hearts to pray we sing and that's one reason for resolution the second reason for resolution being so important is the devil himself you know we have the threefold enemy of the world the flesh Satan why is Satan so anti prayer someone so Satan knows the power of God that is unleashed through prayer so he wants to cut your life line yes will God is his enemy he doesn't want you going to his enemy because he knows you'll get help there why else does he hate prayer

God wins when we pray that's a good one to think about all the different ways God wins when we pray he gets glory he gets honor he gets praise that's winning for God when we pray Satan wants to discredit God Satan wants us thinking God why would I ever want to serve him God wins he's honored he's praised he's glorified when we pray so if God's for it Satan's against it and power says Satan knows the power of prayer and doubtless does all he can to keep us from it and to make it a burden to us in it we see it in the petitions of the Lord's prayer don't we when the disciple said Lord teach us to pray and Jesus says okay when you pray pray like this your kingdom come do you know every time you pray

[33 : 22] God your kingdom come you are praying for the demolition of Satan's kingdom because God's kingdom only comes with the defeat of Satan's kingdom every believer that joins the ranks of God's kingdom is one stolen from Satan's kingdom and so so they're on opposite ends of the totem pole or the teeter totter and so we're taught to pray for the demolition of Satan's kingdom when we pray your kingdom come your will be done we're praying against Satan's will being done on the earth and praying for God's will to be done we're praying lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one prayer has to do with putting Satan down with destroying the devil's works and no wonder he's against that the praying disciple of Jesus is a danger to Satan and his kingdom and all that he cares about no wonder he works to distract us and keep us from it and resist us at it and he does plant his tempting thoughts in our minds he does somehow whisper things in our ears there are some things

Satan cannot do he cannot force us to sin but he can tempt us to sin and most of his temptations are mental what does that mean he has some kind of access to our thoughts doesn't he do you know any scriptures that would support that any examples how so Steve excellent so Jesus and his disciples are walking along and they're going up to Jerusalem and he's saying the son of man must go to Jerusalem and must be mistreated at the hands of the Jews and be crucified and rise again the third day and Peter pulls him off to the side and rebukes him Lord this will never happen to you and

Jesus turns and says get behind me Peter Satan Jesus cuts to the quick he he smells the devil in those words and knows where Peter came up with them get behind me Satan you have in mind the things of men not the things of God you see Satan had somehow planted that in Peter's mind in who knows all the ways his whole messed up view of Messiah that he was looking for a conquering Messiah that would conquer the Romans and help the nation of Israel to rise to ascendancy all the confusion and prejudices in Peter's upbringing Satan was involved there such that now there is this thought in Peter's mind that Messiah can't die the Savior can't die we die but we need a Savior and you're our Savior you can't die it'll never happen and so we see that no the tempting thought is identified as

Satan's that he is put in the mind of Peter and so Jesus calls him out against it what did what did God when he talked to Satan about Job what did Satan say would happen if he put him to the test and took all of his things away he would curse God God you think he loves you you think he serves you for nothing he's just serving you as a mercenary you give him all these good things in life but if you take them away you'll find out he doesn't love you he just serves you because of what he gets from you and God says okay have that him but don't take his life don't touch him and he wipes out his family his wealth what does his wife!

suggest curse God and die where did that thought come from that's not the first time we've heard that thought in the book of Job we heard that in heaven where Satan appeared before God and suggested that's what Job will say but how does Satan get Job tempted to say that on earth but at the hands of his dearly beloved who puts the thought in his heart again!

[38 : 22] Satan has access many of our temptations and trials are his thoughts and surely no small amount of his mental temptations are just here that when we would think to pray he's got a dozen reasons why not to pray and other things to do instead of pray William Cowper hit it restraining prayer we cease to fight prayer makes the Christian's armor!

bright and Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint! upon his knees why so because Satan's just fine with taking on the weakest or the strongest saint he's overpowering every saint he's got more power he is a supernatural being we are natural beings so he's fine with anybody but when the weakest saint prays he calls a greater power on the field and now Satan's done so Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees hence his labors to restrain our prayers he hates the prayer meeting of the church tears down his kingdom seeks to destroy the devil's work read the book of Acts and see what happens when the church does pray so with a supernatural devil!

exerting his supernatural power and temptations in our minds we have every need to meet him with a firm resolve no Satan I will pray I will pray the flesh!

the devil and just very briefly the world how does the unbelieving world system war against prayer I would say number one is just distraction number two is distraction and number three is distraction and then four and five and six is attraction attraction attraction so the world is ever distracting us away from God and spiritual things and attracting us to the things of this world to love the world and the things that are in it 1st John 2 and so it's in that way that the Christian is often pulled against prayer when we would pray we have the world calling us to its activities and to set aside prayer for it you know in that parable of the sower the four soils it was the cares of life and the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things that choked out the word and kept it from producing fruit in the life the world has so much to offer and that's what chokes out

God's word and leads people into the world to live for the world and it will also choke out prayer it not only chokes out the word but it chokes out prayer as well the world's distraction by way of attraction so again power is just telling us there are things loose in our own hearts and in this world and the devil at our heels that makes it important that if we're to pray like we ought it's going to take some resolve and say I will call on the Lord for he will answer me but we'll come back and look at the remaining reasons resolve is needed and see how the answer is to be found and who our God is and what he has promised to do let's pray and ask his help we thank you Lord for your word and just as you were able to describe in Isaiah 40 27 what the people of God would be feeling and thinking and saying in Babylon and under the heel of an enemy nation so we have seen from your word that you know what we're up against that when we would pray that we find these enemies and they meet us every day we carry one around in our chest and we live in a world that is ever pulling at our hearts and a devil who doesn't want

[42 : 41] God's kingdom to come and so we thank you Lord we thank you for the light that you shed upon our minds in your word and it explains things and so rather than giving in to our enemies give us this willpower to determine that even then when we feel least disposed to pray the most backward mindedness to pray that then we will we'll call on your name we'll we'll pray that we might pray better and we ask for your Holy Spirit's help in all of this and thank you that you've promised him as our ever present aid in prayer to help us to pray now we want to come and worship you as you are worthy that you would ever bend those who were your rebels and promise to answer our prayers with good gifts and grace and mercy and help in our time of need this is amazing then bring us with songs of praise and love and adoration for you in this hour we ask in

Jesus name amen