

I RESOLVE

"I was cleaning out my heart one day and there in the dust of my life I discovered in all the corners lay bitterness and fear and strife.

**Hatred that I thought was forgotten; Pettiness, anger, regret;
Selfishness and vanity were stored there, Molded in black silhouette.**

I tossed them all out in my cleaning and burned them with fire from my shame. I waxed and polished and worked there Till I heard someone calling my name.

"My dear, what have you done to yourself?" said my neighbor across the way, "You look so happy!"

Why of course she knew I had cleaned out my heart that day.

I BELIEVE THE CLOSE OF AN OLD YEAR IS A HOLY TIME TO CLEAN OUT OUR HEARTS AND MAKE SOME NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS.

All the great men of the bible made good resolutions, vows, promises to God. It seems that New Year's resolutions have fallen into disrepute. That is partly because such resolutions are often very frivolous, and are not the high resolves of earnest souls, set out, by God's grace, to do better in the New Year than they did in the past one. But there is no good reason why earnest people everywhere ought not to solemnly make vows to God, and promises to themselves to earnestly try, with God's help to do better.

Perhaps you have made New Year's resolutions before and broken them. Well, if you honestly tried you did better than if you had not tried. When you married, you made a solemn resolution and express it publicly to love and cherish your companion until death do you part. No honest man ever rented a house without a solemn vow to pay the rent. The same kind of resolution was implied when you accepted telephone service, or water, or lights, or gas services.

A new year 2009 will soon begin. So it is not too late for us to use this holy occasion to make solemn vows to God. When you read the lives of

great men of God you find that almost all of them made solemn resolutions and endeavored to live up to them.

I. DANIEL VOWED THAT HE WOULD NOT DEFILE HIMSELF

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

Daniel was carried away captive into Babylon when he was probably only high school age. There he was surrounded by idolatry, heathen magic, drunkenness, and all kinds of fleshly sins. Daniel had special temptations because the king provided wine and ceremonially unclean food from his own table every day. Daniel might have written a letter back home in Jerusalem and said, “It is hard to live a godly life in wicked Babylon” But Daniel made a holy resolution and kept it. Daniel kept this resolution for more than 70 years and his purity of life and righteousness of character lifted him to eminence in the reigns of one emperor after another: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus.

God has given me opportunities in my ministry to know young Christian men in the armed forces of our country. I have personally preached in Viet Nam and Korea and in the Philippines and have had personal acquaintances in the military who have told me that are shocked by the gambling, the lewd talk, the drinking, the adultery and fornication of their companions in the Army or Navy or the Marine Corps. They tell me, “Reggie it is difficult to live a Christian life in the military.”

One of my best friends in the ministry is Charles Devore. Chuck as I call him told me that when he served as a Chaplain the Army he was attending an assembly of men who had been in the conflict. They were being allowed a week-end of R and R and their Sergeant was giving them their instructions. They were near a large city and all the boys were anxious to get going so they could find girls. As a parting warning the sergeant showed a very graphic movie concerning the social diseases that were there in the big city. He explained clearly how they could possibly protect themselves from these diseases and then handed out condoms and warned every man to take a supply.

Chaplain Charles Devore started out the door and the Sergeant said "Chappie you'd better take some too." Chaplain Charles Devore said, "No, thank you Sergeant. I love my wife and I vowed to be faithful to her as long as I live. I will not need any."

I thank God for my friend Charles DeVore and I thank God for all Christians who take their stand for what is right and like Daniel resolve not to defile themselves with the godless sins all around.

II. JACOB'S VOW TO TITHE

Genesis 28:22 "of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

Jacob and Esau were twins, but Esau was born first and so ordinarily would have been the favored child with the birthright of leadership in the tribe. But Jacob deceived his father, and brother and stole the blessing from Esau. Then Jacob fled from his brother's wrath. As the weary boy slept on the ground at Bethel, with a stone for his pillow, God gave him a vision of a ladder reaching up to Heaven with angels ascending and descending. Genesis 28:16-22 tells the rest of the story:

16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. 19 He called that place Bethel, ^f though the city used to be called Luz.

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD ^g will be my God 22 and ^h this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

It seems that here Jacob came to a personal knowledge of God, and a personal salvation through his dependence on God for mercy and forgiveness. Perhaps some in this audience need to vow **THEN SHALL THE LORD BE MY GOD.** Other should vow, **THIS SHALL BE GOD'S HOUSE TO ME.** And perhaps many here today should vow **AND OF ALL THAT THOU SHALT GIVE ME I WILL SURELY GIVE THE TENTH UNTO THEE.**

I want to take this opportunity of challenging each and every member of the VHCC to be a tither. I believe in tithing. God has blessed Esther and I through tithing. We as a couple want to recommend it to you. If you tithe God will bless you. If you do not tithe you are a God-robber!

I Cor. 16:1 Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

II Cor. 9: 6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Luke 6: 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

You may say, “I cannot afford to tithe.” I say, **YOU CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO TITHE!!** You will have more blessings if

you do tithe, and you will have fewer blessings if you fail to tithe.

I challenge you to TEST GOD IN 2009. Malachi 3: 8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

“But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’

“In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the LORD Almighty. 12 “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty.

III. PAUL’S VOW TO WIN SOULS BY EVERY MEANS POSSIBLE!

Romans 9: 2I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race,

Romans 10: 1Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

Acts 20:31So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

I Cor. 9:19-23 19Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself

am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. 23I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Vs. 27No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Will you make a new year's resolution to give up any bad habit that hinders you, to memorize scripture so that you know where to turn in the Bible to lead a soul to Christ, to pray daily for some lost soul, to become a "fool for Christ" in order to win that soul? Will you do it?

IV. David's vow about Prayer and the Word of God.

David was a man after God's own heart, and again and again we find him making solemn resolutions to do better.

Psalms 18: 1 I love you, O LORD, my strength.

56: 3 When I am afraid, I will trust in you. 4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?

119: 11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

15 I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

vs35 Direct me in the path of your commands for there I find delight.

Vs. 47 for I delight in your commands because I love them. 48 I lift up my hands to [c] your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.

What a blessed year 2009 will be if you will resolve to read the Bible everyday. Our minister asked me to preach on this subject in anyway that I could. I promised him I would challenge each one of you to read the Bible all the way through in 2009. If you read 3 chapters a day every week day and 5 chapters on Sunday you will read it through in one year.

If you read all of the Joplin Globe each day remember you can read the Bible chapters in the same amount of time it takes to read the average newspaper. Surely it is more important to read God's word than it is to read the newspaper.

If you listen to ABC or CBS or NBC daily news---remember you can read the Bible in the same amount of time it takes to watch the news. Surely the Bible will be more uplifting than the dismal news!

Bible reading guides are on tables in front. Pick one and do it!

V. THE PRODIGAL SON'S VOW

Luke 15:18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' 20 So he got up and went to his father.

The prodigal son represents all lost sinners. He represents everyone of us!! We are either a lost sinner or else we are the prodigal who has repented.

Let us briefly remember Jesus story.

THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

I wish there were some wonderful place called the Land of Beginning Again. Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches and all of our selfish grief, could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door, and never be put on again.

We could find all the things we intended to do but forgot, and remembered too late, Little praises unspoken, little promises broken, and all of the thousand and one little duties neglected that might have perfected the day for one less fortunate.

It wouldn't be possible not to be kind in the Land of Beginning Again, and the ones we misjudged and the ones whom we grudged their moments of victory here would find in the grasp of our loving handclasp more than penitent lips could explain.

So I wish that there were some wonderful place called the Land of Beginning again, Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches and all of our poor selfish grief Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door, and never be put on again.