“That I May Know Him”

December 31, 2017

Philippians 3:1-10

Please open your Bible with me today to Jeremiah chapter nine. It’s that time again. Usually the New Year brings out the resolution recommendations gurus. So, there’s a lot of talk about resolutions. But when some people begin to see how disciplined you’ve got to be in order to achieve them; they lose steam and throw in the towel inside of sixty days. On the other hand, some of you have a definite plan in place and you are determined to see your resolutions through to the end no matter how hard it is to do it.

So, what is a resolution anyway? It comes from the verb “resolve” – “to firmly decide on a specific course of action.” Have you firmly decided to do a specific thing this coming year? Then, it’s very likely that you will overcome every obstacle that stands in the way of getting it done.

So, resolutions. Here are “The TOP 10 NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR 2018.”

TOP 10 NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR 2018

1. Start tracking how you spend your money

2. Don’t online shop for everything

3. Record voice notes to yourself

4. Take time off – and start with a long weekend

5. Stop losing your keys/phone/wallet (try a TrackR Pixel Bluetooth Tracking Device)

6. Change your sheets more (unhealthy otherwise)

7. Stop using your phone as an alarm clock

8. Stop reflexively sharing internet links (if you have to send one, then please read the entire article before you share it)

9. Back up your computer data

10. Get a VPN (Virtual Private Network – hides your IP address) [Found on <https://www.inverse.com/article/39693-2018-new-years-resolutions> December 26, 2017 Eileen Guo].

And according to a the Statistic Brain Research Institute’s most recent polling (January 1, 2017), less than half of those who make New Year’s resolutions keep them after six months. [Found on <https://www.statisticbrain.com/new-years-resolution-statistics>].

And, there was another poll taken by the Franklin/Covey group which found that only 23% of Americans who make a resolution stick with them for the entire twelve months. So, instead Steven Covey says that what will give you the greatest likelihood of succeeding are just two simple things:

1. Decide on **just one** change that you believe will bring you the most delight.

2. Be absolutely clear about **why** you are doing it.

Simple and practical. If anything, include these two factors this year and you’ll be more likely to stay committed.

So, in light of your 2018 New Year’s Resolutions, I want you to go back with me to the Bible and let the words of Scripture stir up your spirit to proceed and then succeed in the coming year. I hope you will find that what I have to say today to be a help to your life, not only today, but from now on.

Let me begin with a passage here in Jeremiah. Have you ever thought that God could have a resolution? A resolution, an effective one, is one in which you special delight in. Given what you know about the LORD, what do you think might delight *Him*?

I actually found it. It’s here in the Prophet Jeremiah. Would you find with me to Jeremiah 9:23. *“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: (24) But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth:* ***for in these things I delight, saith the LORD****.”*

Today’s sermon title is “That I May Know Him.” Shall we pray?

What you delight in will almost always determine what you do. And, do you see here that delights your Heavenly Father?

According to the Scriptures, I’ve found just three things that you can be sure delight the LORD. One, obedience. I Samuel 15:22 *“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”*

Two, truthfulness. Proverbs 12:22 *“Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight.”*

And three, prayer. Proverbs 15:8 *“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.”*

So this isn’t the only place in the Bible about the things that God delights in. But, what does the LORD say to us through the Prophet Jeremiah about what He delights in?

Jeremiah 9:24 *“But let him that glorieth glory [boast] in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”*

Here, in one sense, is God’s resolution; not for one year, of course, but for all time and eternity. You see, what He delights in, He has always delighted in. Here’s what delights your Father. Please carefully note it; “that *you* understand and know Him; …”

How much does the LORD want us to know Him; and to truly know Him; to know Him as He really is; not someone’s opinion of Him. He delights when you seek Him.

One of the things I am learning in recent years about God is this. Even when I am having a difficult time under-standing Him, He’s delighted with me. You see, it’s not your opinion of Him that He wants you to know; but He wants you to know Him; which, by the way, you can’t do apart from discovering Who and what He is in your Bible.

Think with me for just this moment about how powerful this is. If you set your heart on the things that He Himself delights in, don’t you think that He will enable you to know Him as He really is? By the way, you also will, very likely, fulfill all your resolutions to the max if you fit each one of them in under this wonderful reality of choosing to know your Heavenly Father as He truly is.

There are lots of people who want to be wiser, or stronger, and or wealthier? But, as Jeremiah says, stop. Stop and think. Boasting in those sorts of things isn’t the key. Instead, compare them to the things that He delights in.

You see, as great as wisdom and strength and wealth are, the LORD is highly delighted when you put out effort into understanding and knowing Him.

Now, that’s OT. What do we find in the NT? Please turn now with me to the Book of Philippians at chapter three.

Philippians three is one of the most blessed personal testimonies recorded in Scripture. It’s the Apostle Paul’s testimony. And he describes for us what he was really like before He came to the LORD.

Here’s what he says in Philippians 3:4 *“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: (5) Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; (6) Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”*

Here’s what’s on my heart today. What were you like before you came to know the LORD as your personal Savior? You might not remember all that you were in those days. But, I’m sure that you saw yourself in the best light possible. So, when you read Philippians three, you see Paul presenting himself as he really was before he came to the LORD.

Here’s how Paul saw himself in his “pre-Christ” days.

1. He was born into a traditional Jewish home; born of a Jewish Mom and a Jewish dad; parents who adhered to the laws of Moses. Philippians 3:5 *“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel …”*

2. Here’s a man with a lineage going back to a specific tribe; the tribe of Benjamin. Philippians 3:5 *“… of the tribe of Benjamin…”*

He was a Benjamite. Paul could trace his ancestry. And his family tree that took him right back to the beginning of the Jewish roots, to Benjamin, the lastborn son of Jacob.

And why does Paul see his connection to Benjamin as something honorable? Well, we can’t say for sure. But did you know that both Esther and Mordecai, the ones who were used of God to save the entire Jewish nation, were likely descended from the tribe of Benjamin? You see, without the Benjamites, there might not be a Jewish nation.

So, yes, it was important to Paul to let people know his heritage.

1. Here’s a man born into an orthodox Jewish home.
2. Here’s a man with a lineage going back to a specific tribe of Israel.
3. Here’s a man whose Jewish family kept all the Jewish traditions of the day.

Philippians 3:5 *“… an Hebrew of the Hebrews; …”*

You could say he was a true Jew. You might call Paul a

pedigreed Jew. And, as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, Paul was saying that he was not a Gentile in any respect. Paul had Jewish blood in him. He was “extremely” Jewish; a pure-bred Jew [Found on www. <https://readingacts.com> “Paul: A Hebrew of the Hebrews].

1. Here’s a man who was a Pharisee.

Verse five once again Philippians 3:5 *“as touching the law, a Pharisee; …”* Paul took the O.T. literally as was required of every Pharisee. He was taught the Bible. He believed exactly what he read in those same Scriptures you hold in your hand. And did you know that a Pharisee was required to know the Bible by heart?

One scholar describes it this way. “The Jews in Jesus’ day had three levels of education, which was most likely institu-ted by Ezra after the exile in order to teach the people the Scriptures again. The first level was called ‘Bet Sefer’. At the ages of six through twelve, the Jewish boys and girls would begin their education in the synagogue school,

learning how to read and write. The textbook was the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) and the goal was to memorize the sacred text. The Babylonian Talmud Baba Bathra 21a:6 says, “*Before the age of six do not accept pupils; from that age you can accept them, and stuff them with Torah like an ox.*”

The next level was the ‘Bet Midrash’. This was only for the best of the best; I would assume for those who indeed memorized the Torah. This level was from age thirteen to fifteen, where they continued studying and memorizing the entire Tanach (in other words, the complete Old Testament). Very few were selected for this pursuit.

The final level was the ‘Bet Talmud’, which was the longest in duration as it went from the age of 15 to 30. To participate, he must be invited by a Rabbi and, if selected, he would begin a process of grooming that would lead to the potential of becoming a Rabbi at age 30. Those who were chosen were referred to as Talmidim (Torah Scholars).

They would literally follow in the dust of their rabbi – desiring to emulate him in all of his mannerisms. They would eat the same food in exactly the same way as their rabbi. They would go to sleep and awake the same way as their rabbi and, more importantly, they would learn to study Torah and understand God the exact same way as their rabbi.” [Found on www. <https://deurpost.wordpress.com> “Consider This!”]

Even with just three OT verses per day, it would take a full three years to memorize the just the first five Books of the Bible. Paul was a Hebrew in every sense of the word. But, as you are about to see, he was also a man who did not have a personal relationship with the LORD.

1. Here’s a man born into an orthodox Jewish home.
2. Here’s a man with a lineage going back to a specific tribe of Israel.
3. Here’s a man whose parents were both Jewish.
4. Here’s a man who was a Pharisee.
5. Here’s a man who was loved by the Jews and hated by

the Christians. Philippians 3:6 *“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; …”*

As a Pharisee, Paul was among the most zealous Jews in the land. He was truly anti-christ. He persecuted the Saints of God. And he despised both Jesus and anyone who followed Him.

1. Here’s a man who wasn’t a mere theologically and

Scripturally accurate Pharisee; he lived his Jewishness the best way he knew how. Philippians 3:6 *“touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”* Those who have counted the laws inside the Books of Moses say there are 619 of them. And Paul describes himself as blameless. He applied the OT to his personal and public life as best as he could. He strove for personal righteousness and did everything he knew to please God.

To say the least, Paul was a truly hard working man when it came to his attempts at keeping the Law of Moses. No one could ever say Paul practiced his religion half-heartedly. If anything, he might even have made a resolution every January 1st to be a better Pharisee.

But the biggest question that we could ask of Paul is this: *“Did you know and understand God?”* And the answer would have been *“No, I did not.”*

Now, folks, how many religious people do you know who are as dedicated to their religion as Paul was? Who do you know strives for morality? Who do you know that attends church or synagogue or even a mosque faithfully? Who is seriously and sincerely dedicated to his parents up-bringing? Who’s made and kept a lot of resolutions? And who knows where they are going in life?

Yet, with all this, do they know the LORD? Do you know Him? With all his credentials Paul had for being a high-quality human being; with all the credentials he had for being the best in his religion; with all his proof that he was the best Jew possible, what was his testimony when it came to his relationship to a personal knowledge of the LORD?

Philippians 3:7 *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,*

*(9) And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteous-ness which is of God by faith: (10)* ***That I may know him****, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; …”*

His name was Paul. He came with the highest of recommendations from his associates in the Jewish religion. He belonged to the school of the Pharisees. Yet, Moses said it and Jesus fully agreed that the most important command ever given to mankind is Luke 10:27 *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And thy neighbor as thyself.”*

Now, is it possible for a person to be the quality and caliber of a Paul and be all that Paul was and yet not know and love the LORD?

You see, understanding Him, knowing Him, and loving Him are the things that delight God. Can you see how excited Paul was to say what he says here in these verses? His birth into a Jewish home, his heritage going back to Israel himself, both parents orthodox Jews, a perfect knowledge of the Laws of Moses, all 613 specific commands, a man so zealous for his religion that he could stand by while his friends stoned a Christian to death, believing that he was doing God’s will; and blameless when it came to applying the laws of Moses to his own life. Yet, he didn’t know the LORD.

But, what is Paul’s personal testimony regarding Christ? He was willing to give all that up for the things that delighted God more than anything else – personally coming to know and understand Him and love Him.

Philippians 3:8 *“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteous-ness which is of God by faith: …”*

You see, by a million times over, you might be the best of the best, you might supersede everyone else even in religious passion and even striving after personal morality and righteousness. But how many people do you know personally who are stuck in a religious mentality that says “I don’t know the LORD but I’m trying my best”? Sadly, way too many. And it may be you that I’m referring to here.

Folks, it’s not your righteousness that the LORD delights in. It’s not your attempts at being obedient to the Laws of Moses. Rather, it’s a righteousness that is given to you from the LORD Himself. It’s a righteousness that comes into your heart by simple faith.

Folks, when you see God as a Person Who wants, Who delights in bringing you into a personal, one-on-one, father-to-child love relationship; Who delights in bestowing upon you the gift of His own righteous character; when you see Him as this kind of God, then you can say you are living in a world where you know and understand God.

Now, you might be among those who, like Paul, believed that your efforts and your attempts at righteousness is what God delights in. But if so, then you have missed the essence of life. You see, the moment you come to Christ, something marvellous and extreme occurs.

1. First, you enter into a one-on-one relationship with

your Creator. In John 17:3 Jesus said this, *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”*

Now, if I told you that there was only one true and living God, would you say that you know this God? If I said to you that to know Jesus Christ is to know the Father, would you say that you know God? If I said that a personal intimate knowledge of God is a personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, would you say that you know Him?

You see, when you receive God’s love, you receive God’s Son. When you receive God’s Son, you receive everlasting life. This is life eternal, exactly the same kind of life God has; life with an eternal quality to it; life where you know the Father and the Son, both equally God.

First, you find a one-on-one relationship with your

Creator.

Second, when you know Him, you have a God-given righteousness. You are now righteous, just like He is righteous.

Romans 5:16 *“…for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. (17) For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)”*

It’s no longer a bragging about your goodness and righteousness and self-effort. Now, it’s a gratefulness for what God has done inside your heart.

And third, when you come to know Him, you come to know a new kind of love.

Here’s what the Bible teaches. I John 4:7 *“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and* ***every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*** *(8) He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”*

How big your heart is for other people will tell you how great your knowledge of the LORD is. We *love* because we *know*. We love others because we know Him.

You see, in Christ you are a delight to your Heavenly

Father. You are not what you once were. You’re a New Creation in Christ. You see, knowing the LORD is not just better than being the best at your religion. It’s the way you enter into a life of bringing delight to the LORD.

Now, you may be here today with a hope that you are right with God. But, you also, to some degree, know your own heart. If you are not truly righteous; if you aren’t secure in the knowledge that you are His for now and for eternity, then today for you is the Day of Salvation.

Here’s the only thing you can do. You need to acknowledge that your sin is what separates you from God. And when you will repent of your sins and believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, you will be saved.

* To Repent - to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe - to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.

 Jesus Christ paid the penalty for every sin you ever

committed. He became your Substitute on the day He died on Calvary two thousand years ago.

Now, some have said that by saying this, we are saying that there’s no other way to get to God. And I would say this. Imagine, for just a moment that you have contracted malaria and the strain you’ve contracted will result in your death in the next month. Now, a medical doctor in San Francisco, CA has discovered a cure for your malaria.

And, what is your choice? If you go to New York or Boson or Philadelphia, you will meet some excellent doctors who will prescribe some wonderful remedies. But the only one who can cure you is found in California. What will you do?

The only thing that you can do is find a way to get to California, and as soon as possible.

So, with Christ, He’s the Only Way to find the removal of your sins and the application of righteousness to your soul. But it’s your choice. What will you do?

This is the greatest news in all the world. The Father gave Only His Son to pay the penalty for all your sins. Jesus died on the Cross as your Substitute and He wants to be your Savior today. Won’t you cry out to Him for His free gift of salvation? What could possibly hold you back from having a saving relationship with your Creator?

Think about the LORD as the One Who loves you and delights to have you as His Child and to have you know and understand Him. He delighted in purchasing salvation in order to bring His forgiveness into your heart. John 3:16 *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Do you remember where we begin today? Resolve – “to firmly decide on a specific course of action.” Today is your day.

The Sinner’s Prayer. “Father, I realize I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen”

Jesus said, Revelation 3:20 *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me.”*

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 554 “Give Me Jesus”