

Resolve

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But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.

Daniel 1:8a

Resolve: acting with purpose of heart. Have you ever selfishly set your course, deciding, *I'm doing this. I don't care what anybody says. Or even, I'm doing this—even though it is forbidden by God. I'm going to give in to this lust, this strong desire. The facts are irrelevant. I know that I'm going to be ashamed and that there will be a price to pay. I'm going to sow something now that I will have to reap later. But I don't care!* Have you ever had such resolve to sin that you hurdled over, with all your might, every single roadblock that your loving Lord put in front of you?

As a pastor, I must both struggle with my own sin and contend with the sins of many other people. I have observed that it takes great resolve to maintain the opportunity for and secrecy of some sins. In contrast, Romans 13:14 instructs: ***“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”*** Yet once we resolve to choose a particular course of sin, we often, in dedication to that sin, make provision to fulfill it. I'm sometimes amazed at our commitment to sin. I've seen people so dedicated to various sins that they're willing to sacrifice their marriage, children, freedom, career, driver's license, or brain cells to their chosen vice. Sometimes it's not that extreme, but we have all resolved to commit sins that are subtle.

What if we displayed that same level of resolve to follow Christ? What if we were just as dedicated to Christ? He is worthy of our dedication. If we were as committed to Him as most are to the pursuit of pleasure or euphoria, it would be remarkable.

I think we can be. But doing so entails two things: saying no to the lusts, or strong desires, of the flesh; and choosing, by submitting our own wills to the Holy Spirit's control, to respond to God's goodness. We must turn our backs on the lusts

and desires of our fleshly nature. By the indwelling Holy Spirit's strength, we can choose to follow and obey the Lord—not driven by feeling, but out of resolve.

Sometimes people give testimonies about repenting of a vice and conclude that they're now “addicted to Jesus.” Or, looking at spiritually mature people and imagining that they have an overwhelming desire to read God's Word and pray all the time, we long for such a compelling desire to know Jesus. However, I think this is a misunderstanding of the kind of relationship with Himself God calls us into. He doesn't want us to be addicted to Him; He wants us to choose Him. Addiction is consistently driven by desire. And certainly, the Christian life contains aspects of response to good, righteous desire. But overall, we are to be continually making choices mindful of the eventual, ultimate, and eternal joy that is set before us. We decide to say no to desire now, using our abilities to God's glory instead of in pursuit of our own pleasure, in order to experience the joy of hearing our Father say later, ***“Well done, good and faithful servant”*** (Matthew 25:21b). Righteous choices now do bring the current fulfillment of knowing we are pleasing the Lord. But God doesn't mean for us to be compelled by constant desire such that we can't help but follow Jesus. Rather, we are to take charge of desire and choose what is right because it is right.

The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, ***“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”*** (Matthew 26:41b). Why did He say that? Because they napped when He asked them to pray with Him! After agonizing in prayer, He came back and found them asleep. We are so prone to our flesh's desires.

I'm signed up for the 11:30 p.m. time slot of our church's prayer watch. It's a good time

period for me because I'm usually wide awake—until I go to pray, that is. Typically I pray walking around. But one night in my study, I decided to kneel in front of the couch. And you know what happened: I woke up at 2:00 a.m., with my arms and legs paralyzed. I could barely get myself up off my legs to stand. So I flopped on

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the floor and went back to sleep; there was nothing else I could do. I woke up some time later, when my limbs were working, and crawled to bed. It was pitiful. What a warrior! What a sentry!

This incident illustrates our spirit's willingness and our flesh's weakness. Very few of us ever fall asleep in the midst of sin. But then we try to read the Bible at night, and before we know it, we're asleep! That's the way we are. The virtue, however, is in doing it anyway—not because we're compelled, but because it is right.

I love God's Word. Yet usually when I have a strong compulsion to read it, it's out of desperation. Most of the time, I choose to read it because doing so is right.

Resolve. Purpose of heart. Let's resolve to choose something that is contrary to our wills: submitting our wills to God's will. ↗

