Failed resolutions

While the beginning of the new year brings with it such high hopes, we are soon reminded that while the spirit is willing, the flesh is often weak. Those leftover Christmas cookies sabotage that new year diet. The gyms that are crowded in January are quiet in February. The pace of life and the expense of healthy eating make a run through the drive thru at the fast food joint just easier than cooking healthy at home. Activities send families going multiple directions. Time to sit and read or relax gets swallowed up by more “pressing” tasks. Even those spiritual resolutions often fade. New Year's resolutions often fade into New Year's disappointments.

Resolutions fail because they are made by sinners who daily fall short of what God has created them to be. Resolutions fail because those making them are relying on themselves and their own efforts. Resolution failure is so rampant that many have given up on even attempting them.

The real issue with this is that being resolved is far more complicated than we care to admit. Making changes in our lifestyle goes against who we are as sinner/saints. We like doing things our way. To make a resolution means that we must come to grips with the reality that in some ways what we have always done was not good. Resolutions are an act of passively admitting that we were wrong in
something. That is not a very popular mindset for anyone. Do you like to be wrong? Do you like admitting you need to change?

Being resolved also takes concerted effort. It requires intentional reflection on the lives that are being lived. There is a need to think about why we do what we do. Rather than reflexively eating that extra dessert, resolve requires us to come to grips with the fact that we should probably put the fork down altogether! Resolve requires denial of wants and a focus on need. We know that the pillow is soft and the bed is warm, but the Lord's gifts are waiting for us at His altar on Sunday morning. Resolve is what gets us out of bed and into the Lord's House.

Repentance and resolve

Directly connected to resolve is another word that is so critical for resolved stewards: repentance. New Year's resolutions are small ways that we are admitting that we have not been faithful in our stewardship of the things that God has entrusted to us. Those resolving to quit smoking are admitting that their habit is not good stewardship of their bodies. Those resolving to get their financial house in order are confessing that they have not been good stewards of the resources that God has entrusted to them. Those resolving to pray more and study more and worship more are confessing that they have not been faithful stewards of the Gospel in their lives and the lives of their families.

Resolve and repentance are trusts from God. Our Lord has created us in His image to bear the Gospel to a world that sits in the darkness of sin and death. God's Word convicts us of our sin and then leads us into the Gospel beauty of the forgiveness of sins and new life. This new life of faith then takes up faithful stewardship of all the trusts the Lord bestows upon it for the sake of the Gospel and the benefit of the neighbor.

Resolving to live our vocations

When repentance leads us to resolution by God's Word, various results occur, because the journey is being started from many different places. When resolutions begin with the question of stewardship from God's perspective, there is a different kind of impetus: resolving to take better care of the body so that it can be more faithful in service to the Lord and the neighbor, rather than simply wanting to attain a beach body before summer. Resolving to be a better financial steward so that ministry can be better supported and the Gospel advanced, rather than wanting to get enough money saved to buy that new boat. When the steward is led by God to resolve to use all of their life and life's resources in a faithful way for the work of the Gospel, God is doing great things in the steward and in the world.

Steward leaders are called by God to be resolved to present stewardship in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a call to repentance for these leaders as well. If stewardship is reduced to just paying the bills or building a new building or even just "fundraising," the point of stewardship has been missed. God's people have been created for stewardship. The task of a resolved steward leader is to hold this truth before God's stewards. It will confront them. It will convict them. It will, by the work of the Holy Spirit, lead many to repentance and a resolve to reflect our Lord Jesus to others.

Steward leaders, this can be done in 2021, even in the midst of a pandemic. It requires repentance and resolve on our, the leader's, part. When the Lord works that in them, He will also use these resolved steward leaders to raise up and lead resolved stewards!