

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith
Audio Script - January 02, 2009

Welcome to 2009. Among the many traditions expressed at the start of a new year are the resolutions we make for improved vitality and quality of life. As you promise yourself these efforts of change, what kind of spiritual resolutions will be a part of your list? Paul's letter to the church at Thessalonica gives us a worthy goal in today's Templates of Truth.

The Apostle Paul issues a challenging resolution that each of us can adopt as we venture into a new year: *Brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus... walk and please God (just as you actually do walk) that you may excel still more* (I Thessalonians 4:1). The vitality and quality of every believer's life would be greatly enhanced if each of us would pledge that resolution to God. The word that is translated *walk* means to conduct yourself. Peter said it this way: *As obedient children... like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior, because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."* (I Peter 1:14-16). Living a holy life means living a separated, consecrated life. It means living in such a way that a holy life is clearly distinguishable from an unholy life.

Unfortunately, that distinction is being seen less and less in our modern day. More and more of God's people are living just as unholy as non-believers, manifesting no distinction between living a life for God and living one for Satan. I believe the Bible reveals a growing presence of evil and wickedness taking over the world as we near the end of time. Satan and his demonic force know their days are numbered and they work relentlessly to destroy as many lives as they can while they still have time. God's people are some of their primary targets, and unfortunately, many of us have fallen casualty to their assaults through compromise and rebellious disobedience. The promise of God in the Psalm of David, however, is that our *steps... are established by the Lord... when (we) fall, (we) shall not be hurled headlong; because the Lord is the One who sustains us with His hand* (Psalm 37:23-24). God certainly does not establish our evil steps, but since He promises never to leave us nor to forsake us, He still graciously and lovingly guides our steps, even when we walk in wicked ways. That undeserving protection keeps us from being *hurled headlong*, a phrase meaning to be utterly cast down and out. This does not mean that we will not experience suffering and painful consequences from our unholy choices, *because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you* (I Thessalonians 4:6). Through the application of His loving judgment and discipline, God is purging our lives of the unholy nature within us, and building His divine, holy nature in its place.

People often say that New Year's resolutions are made to be broken. That is because they usually are. We do well for the first few weeks or months, but soon we become lax and the next thing we know, our resolution is just a good intention of the past. Living a holy life is not easy. Jesus acknowledged, *the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak* (Matthew 26:41). Paul knew this struggle all too well: *for the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish* (Romans 7:19). The fact that our flesh weakens our will to live holy does not negate God's expectation for us to strive to do so. Remember, to walk means to conduct yourself. You and I have a willful choice in the process. It requires us to make holy choices. With each step of obedience we make in our walk of holiness, God helps and strengthens us: *Submit therefore to*

God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (James 4:7-8). We make the choice to submit, resist and draw near, and it is a day-by-day, moment-by-moment decision.

So, here is a worthy New Year's Resolution - write it down: I will strive with God's help to resist doing the sinful things my flesh desires, and make the willful choice to do the holy things that please my Heavenly Father. Commit that resolution to God in prayer, and ask Him to empower and strengthen you to keep it. Be radical in your way of life to do all that is required in order to remain faithful to this resolution. Holiness is often a strict and hard choice, but you can make it. As the Nike marketing slogan goes – JUST DO IT!

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible Teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.

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