

# *West Suffolk Baptist Church*

## *Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant*



*Volume 13 Issue 1*

## *West Suffolk Epistle*



*January 2026*

### *Perils of the Dragnet*

*“... and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matthew 13:50)(NASB).

The doctrine of hell is undoubtedly the most difficult one for Christians to accept emotionally. Yet Scripture mentions it too often for us to deny or ignore it. Jesus gives several warnings of it in the Sermon on the Mount. *“It is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell”* (Matthew 5:29; Matthew 5:22; Matthew 11:23; 23:33; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:9–10; John 15:6).

God’s Word teaches us some basic truths about hell—what this parable calls *“the furnace of fire”*—that aid us in partially grasping its terror. **First**, it is a place of constant torment and pain. Jesus called its torment darkness (Matthew 22:13), which means no light penetrates and nothing is visible. Our Lord also called the torment a fire that never goes out (Mark 9:43), from which the damned find no relief.

**Second**, hell includes the torment of both body and soul. Contrary to some teachings, neither is annihilated at death and never will be. Just as believers’ souls will receive resurrected bodies to enjoy heaven forever, unbelievers’ souls will receive resurrected bodies to experience hell forever (Matthew 10:28; John 5:29; Acts 24:15). Jesus further called hell a place *“where their worm does not die”* (Mark 9:44). Once the bodies of deceased believers are consumed by worms, no more harm can be done to them. But the resurrected bodies of unbelievers will never be consumed. Such sobering reminders ought to prompt us to pray for the lost with greater urgency. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

### *New Year’s Resolutions for God’s Glory, Not Our Own*

It seems that every December, many people make well-intentioned resolutions for the new year. With premeditated bursts of enthusiasm, they are caught up in a whirlwind of peculiar, and sometimes public, activities that puzzle even neighborhood children. We witness surprising promises and new year’s manifestos whereupon we are summoned to behold what sweeping changes may come in the new year.

The skeptical observer may ask: Is all this new year’s fervor genuine? Is it helpful? Is it really necessary? Moreover, the curious onlooker may ask: Is it even appropriate to make resolutions? After all, shouldn’t we at all times and all seasons seek to live wisely, obediently, and biblically?

Some may even go so far as to argue that resolutions themselves are not biblical, based on the fact that the Word of God itself provides us with a complete and authoritative compilation of God’s resolutions for His people to obey. To manufacture our own list of resolutions, they would argue, is superfluous at best. These are the sorts of questions I have always considered when it comes to the whole business of making resolutions, and I have a hunch that many of my biblically informed brethren also ponder such questions.

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### ***New Year's Resolutions for God's Glory, Not Our Own***

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Yet, we know that it is right and biblically justifiable to resolve to establish certain priorities and principles in life so that we might serve others faithfully and glorify God in all we think, say, and do. And although it has not been my habit to make new year's resolutions, I have always sought to establish and keep certain priorities and principles by which I strive to live every day, praying that the Lord would come to my aid daily to help me live according to those priorities and principles for His glory, and His glory alone, and not for the accolades and applause of those around me.

As such, in considering how to glorify God in all that we do in our particular circumstances and callings, it is appropriate for us to establish and keep certain priorities and principles as we strive to love and follow Christ as His disciples—to the end that we might obey all that He has commanded us. For some, resolutions may be one way they go about doing this, whether they make these resolutions at the turn of the new year or throughout the year. All the while, whether or not we make resolutions, we do well to remember that we can only keep our priorities and principles in life by the power of the Holy Spirit, resting assured that by faith, and by faith alone, we have been declared righteous by the Father because of the righteousness of the Son.

The nineteen-year-old Jonathan Edwards knew his weaknesses and was aware of the destructive nature of his sin, so he resolved to establish certain priorities and principles in his life in his effort to live entirely for the glory of God. He helped pave the way for us as he prefaced his seventy resolutions with these words:

*Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God's help, I do humbly entreat Him by His grace to enable me to keep these resolutions, so far as they are agreeable to His will, for Christ's sake.*

These simple introductory words of Edwards not only provide us with a glimpse into the mind of one of history's greatest thinkers, but they also provide us with a glorious insight into the heart of a young man who had been humbled and mastered by the Lord God Almighty. We would therefore do well to consider Edwards' prefatory remarks as we seek to glorify God and enjoy Him forever in our churches, our homes, and our hearts.

### **Resolving Sensibly**

*"Being sensible,"* Edwards begins his preface—we must be sensible, reasonable, in making resolutions. If we hastily make resolutions out of an illusion of sinless perfection, it is likely that we will not merely fail in our attempt to keep such resolutions but that we will likely be less inclined to make any further resolutions for similar desired ends. We must go about making resolutions with genuine prayer and out of a thorough study of God's Word. Our resolutions must be in accord with the Word of God; therefore, any resolution we make must necessarily allow us to fulfill all our particular callings in life. We must consider all the implications of our resolutions and be careful to make resolutions with others in mind, even if it means implementing new resolutions incrementally over time.

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### *New Year's Resolutions for God's Glory, Not Our Own*

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#### **Resolving Dependently**

*"I am unable to do anything without God's help,"* Edwards admits. We must be honest in grasping the simple truth that every resolution must be made in dependence on God. And while every Christian would respond by saying, *"Well, of course we must depend on God for all things,"* most Christians have been sold the world's bill of goods. They think that once they become dependent on God, they will have immediate strength. They repeat the world's mantra: *"Whatever doesn't kill me will make me stronger."* While the principle is generally true, such thinking can foster an attitude of proud independence. We must understand that being able to do all things through Christ who strengthens us means that we must depend on His strength continuously in order to do all things and to keep all our resolutions (Ephesians 3:16; Philippians 4:13; Colossians 1:11). In truth, whatever doesn't kill us makes us weak, by God's conforming grace, so that in our weakness we will rely continuously on the strength of our Lord (2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

#### **Resolving for Christ's Sake**

*"So far as they are agreeable to His will for Christ's sake."* We cannot resolve to do anything with a presumptuous attitude before God. The whole matter of making resolutions is not just goal setting so that we might have happier lives. We are called by God to live according to His will, not our own—for Christ's sake, not our own—for it is not to us but to Him that all glory belongs (Psalm 115:1). ~ **Dr. Burk Parsons**

### *A Resolution for the Christian Life*

Today, we'll explore a text for the new year from one of the Apostle Paul's letters. You're probably familiar with it, and perhaps you even know it by heart. But even if you don't know it, I think you'll be able to remember it quite easily. It's Paul's personal resolution in Philippians 3:10–14:

*That I may know him [Christ] and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

*Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*



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### *A Resolution for the Christian Life*

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At the beginning of Philippians, Paul indicates that his young colleague Timothy was with him. Paul often dictated his letters, and I've sometimes wondered if he mentions Timothy because he served as his secretary for this letter. It begins with the words "*Paul and Timothy,*" and I wonder if he gave his son in the faith a slight smile when he told him to write his own name down.

But if that were the case, I'm pretty sure that as Paul came to this passage, "*But one thing I do,*" Timothy might well have looked up at Paul with a quizzical stare. And if Paul asked if he'd said something that Timothy didn't understand, perhaps he would have had the courage to respond: "*Paul, do you really want me to say that you do only one thing? As long as I've known you, you've always been doing many things, and at the same time. You're the ultimate multitasking Apostle. You're always traveling; you're always preaching; you're always praying; you're always visiting; you're always counseling. I've never seen you do just one thing.*"

I think Paul would have smiled back to his young friend Timothy and said: "*I know what you mean, Timothy. No one knows better than you what I do and how busy I am. But you need to understand that I'm not busy doing many different things. I'm busy doing one thing in many different ways. And all of them are about getting to know the Lord Jesus Christ better, sharing His life and becoming like Him. That is the heart—in some ways it's the secret—of everything I do, in every waking hour and every different activity. They are all simply different ways of doing this one thing.*"

When I was a small boy in Scotland, each New Year's Eve (Hogmanay, as it's called), my parents would tell me to go to my room and write out ten New Year's resolutions for the year to come. Looking back, I laugh now when I remember how hard I thought it was to find ten ways that I needed to improve. I could write them out much more easily today, I suspect.

But if you are a Christian, you really need only one New Year's resolution, and Paul's will be a great help to you. Especially if you're a younger Christian or a younger person, few things can be more helpful to you than to understand that this is the way to both simplify and integrate your life. This is what will give you direction. This is what will help you answer the great question, "*What am I really here for?*"

As one of the older translations puts it,

*All I care for is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, to share the fellowship of his sufferings and be made like him, that one day I may attain to the resurrection.* (Philippians 3:10–14)

What a great New Year's resolution. This one thing I do: I want to know Christ. ~ **Dr. Sinclair B. Ferguson**

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### *The Weekend and the Lord's Day*

The weekend. The very term evokes what, exactly? Fun? Entertainment? Sleeping in? Brunch? Sports? And what exactly does weekend include? Friday afternoon, Saturday, and Sunday? Interesting, isn't it, how Sunday gets wrapped into the concept of the week's end, when Scripture would have us think in an entirely different way—with Sunday as the beginning rather than the end of the week.

Avoiding for a minute the issue of how Sunday should be observed, let's think about the psychological effect of viewing Sunday as the beginning of the week. What difference does that make?

**First**, it clearly defines a gospel shape to the week—beginning with gracious rest and followed by grateful work. This is in contrast to the shape of the old covenant pattern—work followed by rest. There is no indication in this that during the period of the Old Testament there was no understanding of the gospel—far from it. Where, after all, did Paul go to explain justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law? To Abraham and David (Romans 4:1–12, citing Genesis 15:16 and Psalm 32:1–2).

**Second**, the Lord's Day—yes, that's what the early Christians called it (Revelation 1:10), signaling thereby that this day had a status distinct from other days—is special. So special, in fact, that this particular day is denoted as belonging to the Lord. Do not all days belong to the Lord? Is not God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—not Lord of space and time? Yes, He is. Nevertheless, early Christians felt it important to recognize the first day of the week (Sunday by our reckoning, though in all likelihood, sundown Saturday to sundown Sunday in theirs) as having a special status and consequent obligation.

**Third**, the Lord's Day is a gift. Each week we are provided with an opportunity to gather together as a fellowship, a family, with Jesus as our Elder Brother. Our Father calls us together for worship—to sing, to pray, to read Scripture and hear it expounded, and to baptize and share a meal together—signs and seals of all the blessings and privileges of the gospel and of the covenant of grace that lies behind it. Sundays are fitness enhancing, ensuring the health of our souls. It is a time of spiritual nourishment, to be used wisely and with discipline—profiting from the Lord's Day does require effort and resolve on our part, including preparation and expectation. Here, as elsewhere in the Christian life, the saying is true that *“you do not have, because you do not ask”* (James 4:2).

The Puritans referred to the Lord's Day as “the market Day of the soul”—viewing a well-spent Lord's Day as preparation for the working week that would follow. And here's a thought: Is the reason why our work is viewed with dread and foreboding that we do not utilize the gift of the Lord's Day to the full?

Enjoy your Lord's Day. ~ **Dr. Derek W.H. Thomas**

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If you have a birthday or anniversary in January that is not posted here or is listed in error or you do not want to be published in this newsletter, please contact Walt or e-mail him at [gwlcf10415@gmail.com](mailto:gwlcf10415@gmail.com).

### ***Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner January 2026***

#### **Birthdays**

**Rick G. (1)**      **Jack B. (24)**  
**Corrisa A. (3)**      **Muriel R. (24)**  
**Marcie S. (9)**      **Stephen H. (26)**  
**Dan A. (22)**

#### **Anniversaries**

**None to Report**

### **Sons and Heirs** **Galatians 4:3 - 7**

<sup>4</sup> <sup>3</sup> In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. <sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup> And because you are sons, God has sent <sup>j</sup>the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. ~ **ESV**



**West Suffolk Baptist  
Church  
Leadership**

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