

# ‘I Am Resolved’

By PAUL J. SCHARF

I experienced all kinds of weather playing eight years of high school and college football in Wisconsin—from the burning heat of August to the frigid cold of November. I only remember one snowfall, during a practice in my last season in college. But I remember rain—lots and lots of rain and, especially, lots of mud.

Easily the most memorable game in which I played took place at Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minn.,<sup>i</sup> in my senior year at Maranatha.<sup>ii</sup> Rain fell throughout the day, and we came up short in a second-half comeback, in what felt like ankle-deep mud—although we ended up tying Northwestern for the conference championship.

I always liked to play in the mud. For one thing, it neutralized everyone’s speed, which was great for a guy like me—the slowest player on the field!

But do you know who feels the worst of all the players leaving a muddy field? It’s not the guys who suffered injuries—which, I understand, are usually fewer in bad-weather games. It’s not the guys with mud everywhere inside and outside of their uniforms. No—it’s the guys with the clean, white uniforms. They didn’t get to feel like they contributed, or even had any fun. For the sake of the team, they just got soaked in the rain.

And that lesson, to me, is directly applicable to ministry. I want to be the muddiest player on the proverbial field. I want to need my uniform to be washed—burned, if necessary. I don’t want to leave my field of service with a clean jersey.

I often enjoy the preaching of another former football player, Dr. Steven Lawson. Commenting on the reality “that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58), Lawson stated regarding the word *labor*:

This word ... means labor to the point of exhaustion. It means to give to the point that you have nothing left to give. I used to play football, and I can remember a couple of little scenes, in my little football past, of just literally being carried off the field. I mean, you just have nothing left to give—you’ve just left it all on the field.<sup>iii</sup>

I must confess that I have some regrets from my football career. I have some regrets from my academic career. But going forward, I desire to have no regrets from my service for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. I want to leave it all on the field.

Being in a support-raising ministry for the first time has altered my outlook in this regard. It strikes me that I have a duty to work harder than anyone who supports me financially.

But I also want to get better—to do better the next time I preach, teach, write, speak ... than the last time. With God’s help, through prayer, I want to progress in knowledge, wisdom, ability and skill.

In an itinerant ministry, I often present the same sermon multiple times. I never want that to become mechanical. Even if the message is familiar to me, it is new to my hearers—and that unique moment will never happen again. It deserves my best effort.

I need to accomplish more, utilizing all the tools at my disposal in this age of information and technology. We have more resources than God's people have ever had, and we will be accountable for how we have used them, and what we have achieved. He has called us all to be spiritual athletes (2 Tim. 2:5), not spectators.

A Baptist preacher named Palmer Hartsough evidently felt a similar sense of conviction more than a century ago, when he wrote the words of this beloved gospel song:

I am resolved no longer to linger,  
charmed by the world's delight;  
things that are higher, things that are nobler,  
these have allured my sight.<sup>iv</sup>

But there is an added dimension in our time. I believe with all my heart that we are witnessing God at work in setting the stage for the future fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, in the coming tribulation. We are seeing amazing things of Biblical and prophetic significance happening right before our very eyes!

Let me be clear: I do not believe in date-setting for the Lord's return. But I do advocate for wise time-using for each of us as His servants.

So, what if these really are the closing days of the church age? How could we begin to calculate the magnitude of the responsibility that we would have—the stewardship that would be ours, for which we “will give an account” (1 Pet. 4:5)—if God has given us the privilege and responsibility of being His representatives in the church, to the world, “for *such* a time as this” (Esth. 4:14)?

These Biblical realities call for an unusual level of commitment in response. Indeed, they call for some good old-fashioned *resolution*:

I am resolved, and who will go with me?  
Come, friends, without delay;  
taught by the Bible, led by the Spirit,  
we'll walk the heavenly way.<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Now the University of Northwestern.

<sup>ii</sup> Maranatha Baptist Bible College—now Maranatha Baptist University—in Watertown, Wis.

<sup>iii</sup> Steven J. Lawson; “Encouragement at 2015 Staff Christmas Dinner;” SermonAudio Classics; Dec. 14, 2015; <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=1221152321133>; Internet; accessed 8 September 2022.

<sup>iv</sup> Palmer Hartsough; “I Am Resolved.” Public domain. Taken from “I Am Resolved;” Hymnary.org; n.d.; [https://hymnary.org/text/i\\_am\\_resolved\\_no\\_longer\\_to\\_linger](https://hymnary.org/text/i_am_resolved_no_longer_to_linger); Internet; accessed 8 September 2022.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.