

A New You for a New Year - Revelation 21:5

Introduction: This is the time of the year for new things. People are wearing the new clothes or jewelry; kids are playing with new toys, and teens are playing with new gadgets they got for Christmas. And then there are the New Year's resolutions people make.

I heard about one guy who was at a New Year's party. He asked a friend for a cigarette. The friend said, "I thought you made a New Year's resolution to quit smoking." The man said, "I'm in the process of quitting; I've just started phase one." "What's phase one?" his friend asked. The man said, "I quit buying them."

Isn't that the way it is? People want change, but they aren't willing to do what is necessary to make that change. I've read that over 90% of all New Year's resolutions won't last over a month.

A couple of years ago, Joel Osteen, pastor of the Lakewood Church in Houston TX wrote a book entitled, "Become a Better You." A lot of people probably saw that title and said, "Why would I want a better me? What's wrong with me now?" But the truth of the matter is that, if we'd be honest, we all can be better. But I don't want to talk about becoming better as much as I want to talk about becoming brand new. And what better time to talk about new things than at the start of a new year. So let's focus our attention for a little while this morning on how to become "A New You for a New Year."

Revelation 21:5 (NIV) says, "He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'" So, it doesn't matter what state you are in right now in this point and time of your life, God is saying He can make it new. And it's not just one time of the year, but every day God can make it new no matter what. So on this first Sunday of 2010, let me give you some things new things we need. First we need:

1. A New Beginning

Did you know that more wedding proposals are made on New Year's Eve than at any other time of the year? I would have thought Valentine's Day, but if you think about it, what better way to begin a New Year than with the person you love. Of course, the way things are going, a lot of those couples would like to have a new beginning again after a few years of marriage.

But the point is, new things give us an opportunity to start over. A new job means you have a challenge to do better than the last job. In a new job they don't know your weaknesses, failures and problems. So a new job can be a second chance of sorts.

At this time of the year, with New Year's resolutions being made, they are made with at least a hope for a new beginning. They are made with the idea of starting over. Wouldn't it be good if in some areas of our lives we could just start over with clean slate? Wouldn't it be nice if we could start over and have all the mistakes from the past gone? Sounds good doesn't it? Well, that is exactly what God gives us when we are saved.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" That means that for anyone who is in Christ, **all** things have become new. In other words,

when you enter into a personal relationship with Christ, no matter what your past may have been; no matter how many times you messed up or failed; your slate is wiped clean. *“The old has gone.”*

Now some people take this to mean that when they get saved, they won't have to suffer the consequences of their past sins. But this is not like in the game of monopoly. If you land in jail in monopoly, you have to stay there until you skip three turns. That is unless you have a *“get out of jail free card.”* With that card, you are released from your *“sentence,”* and you get to resume your turn as if nothing happened.

Well, when it comes to salvation, it's just not that way. When you enter into a personal relationship with Christ, and He wipes the slate clean by recreating the old you into a new creation, He doesn't give you a *“get out of jail free card.”* It means that God does not hold your past against you. You see, we have to understand that it only takes one sin to keep us out of heaven. One sin can separate us from an eternity in heaven with Jesus Christ. That is how holy God is. So when you trust Christ for your salvation, and He forgives you and wipes the slate clean in your life and He remembers your sin no more, you do have new beginning with Him in your life.

So, in 2010, you may be in need of a new beginning. And you can have it by entering into a personal relationship with Christ. Secondly, when you have a new beginning, and you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior then you become:

2. A New Person

Now, does this mean that by accepting Christ as your Lord and Savior, it'll be like Clark Kent walking into a phone booth and stepping out as Superman? No, but the change in your life will be powerful.

A couple of weeks ago I showed you what a visible and dramatic difference Christ made in our cousin who was a member of a biker gang in Chicago. He was a mean dude who would just as soon stab you with a knife as look at you. He was hooked on drugs and alcohol, and pushed it on the streets. But when God got a hold of him, He made a dramatic difference in his life both in his behavior and his appearance. And now, you can hardly tell him from the person he used to be.

When Christ comes into a person's life, He changes them. Now it won't always be a visible change like it was with our cousin. By making a change, I mean God doesn't perform plastic surgery and make an ugly person beautiful. But He does perform drastic surgery and makes a drastic difference in other areas of our lives. I've known of people who've had addictions to drugs or alcohol, leave it all, without ever craving it again after they've been saved. I've known people who were bad spouses, bad parents, or bad students who after receiving Christ, became a new person.

Bill Gaither wrote a song a few years ago that talks about this dramatic change Christ can make in people's lives. It's a first person testimony of the new person:

*Today, I went down to the place where I used to go
Today, I saw the same old crowd I knew before*

*And when they asked me what had happened, I tried to tell them,
Thanks to Calvary, I don't come here anymore.
Then we went down to the house where we used to live,
My little boy ran behind the door;
I said "Son never fear, you've got a new Daddy."
Thanks to Calvary we don't live here anymore.
Thanks to Calvary I am not the man I used to be
Thanks to Calvary things are different than before.
And as the tears ran down my face I tried to tell them,
Thanks to Calvary, I don't live here anymore.*

When you enter into a relationship with Christ, you become a new person. Now like I said, it's not always an outward change. I was saved at the age of 10. I wasn't hooked on drugs or alcohol, but I might have been hooked on chocolate. I wasn't a thief or a liar, although I probably lied about peeking at my Christmas gifts a time or two. I wasn't a murderer, although I did want to kill my brother several times for picking on me. My change was more of an inward change. After I got saved, when I did do something wrong, I felt guilty and convicted about it. After I got saved, my outlook on life changed from a self-centered focus to more of a focus on others. The difference was that now, the Holy Spirit was living in my heart. He was directing my thoughts and my actions, and on the inside, I was a new person. And anyone who accepts Jesus as their Lord Savior will become a new person as well.

Now, let me clarify something. When we're saved, it makes a difference in our works. Now we are not saved by works, but our works should be proof of the change in our lives.

In Colossians, Paul talks about the things we should avoid as new persons in Christ. He said: *"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."* **Colossians 3:5-10 (NIV).**

Then in vs. 12-14, we read what the new person should look like: *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."* **Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV).** That last verse sums it all up. To be this new person; you need to have love, because love will cover a multitude of sins.

Then Paul goes on to give us some helps in living as a new person in vs. 15-17: *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed,*

do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:15-17

(NIV)

Simply put... let The Lord be the Lord of your life. Make Him the boss. And when we do that, we'll be more thankful. We'll get into God's word and obey it and apply to our lives. We'll encourage one another. We'll be more worshipful. When we make Him the Lord of our lives, everything we do or say will be done out of a grateful heart for what He has done in our lives. That's how we live as this new person.

Conclusion: I want to say to those who might be thinking, *“Well, that all sounds great, but what if accept Christ, and He does all that for me, and I still mess up?”* Well, it's like this:

One New Years Day, a son called his parents to wish them a Happy New Year. In the course of the conversation, the son asked, *“Dad, what's your New Year's resolution?”* The dad responded, *“To make your mother as happy as I can all year.”* Then he asked his Mom the same question. She replied, *“To see that your dad keeps his New Year's resolution.”*

See, here's the deal...even after you enter into that new beginning with Christ and become that new person, it doesn't mean that you'll lose your sin nature. We are human, and we're still susceptible to temptation and are still prone to sin. Temptation is a universal and perpetual problem for us all. But, you see, God knows that, so He made a way so that when we stumble and fall, we can still have a new start.

1 John 1:5-9 (NIV) says, *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

God keeps His commitment to us by making a way so we can have a new start each and every time we stumble and fall. Isn't that wonderful! All we have to do is come to Him confessing our sin and ask for His forgiveness. And when we do, He says that because He is faithful and just, He will forgive us and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness.

So, as we embark on a new year, ask yourself. *“Is it time for a new me? Isn't it about time I have a new beginning? Isn't it about time I give my life to Christ and ask Him to make me a new person?”* If you're tired of the old life of sin and guilt and worry, it's time for a new beginning. It's time to start over with a brand new person. Only God can do that. He's the one who is can make everything new. In Christ, He will transform you into a new creation. In Christ, He will do away with the old you. In Christ, He can make a new you for a new year.