

## Happy New Year

Each year, at midnight on December 31 those of us who live according to the Gregorian Calendar bring to a close the happenings of the past three hundred and sixty-five days, and declare that we have entered into a New Year. Under our calendar, this happens every 366th day, and one would think that it would become rather old and trite during the period of a lifetime. But there seems to be a certain kind of excitement in the air, and we find great pleasure in adopting the idea that things are about to begin anew for us. This idea seems to be somewhat characteristic of man, and it really does not make much, if any, difference what our calendar may be. For example, the Chinese, who do not live under the same calendar as we do, enter into great celebrations at their new year. Although their culture is vastly different from ours, still, like us, they relish the passing of an old year and celebrating the beginning of a new one.

One of the things that we do which is so meaningful is that we often sincerely wish one another "happy new year." It seems to me that what we are saying, when we do this, is that we are hoping that the next 365 days will be good to us, and that we will find great blessing in them. When those of us who are Christians wish one another "happy new year," we are expressing a desire that great blessings, not only of a physical but of a spiritual nature as well may be ours to enjoy. Many congregations of our people meet together on New Year's Eve to sing praises to God, and to express special thanks for the blessings of the last year, and to petition for continued blessing in the coming year. This is a matter upon which God is indifferent, and since it is never wrong to worship God, such activities would fall into the category of indifferent things of which Paul spoke in Romans Chapter Fourteen. We are not worshipping the New Year, but the God who gives us all our years. God is worthy of that kind of honor.

There are people who celebrate this "holiday" in very unwholesome ways and as a result of such things as drinking, great distress, pain and agony come to both the people who engaged in such, and to innocent people around them. This kind of "celebration" is a travesty and causes great unhappiness in the lives of a number of people and there is nothing "happy" about such a new year. But when one engages in that which is sinful and unwholesome, nothing good can ever come from it.

New Year's day is a time in which a number of people make resolutions about the changes that they want to make in their lives in the coming year. Many of those resolutions revolve around such things as reducing food intake and body fat. We often laugh about things like that, and say that "New Year's Resolutions are made to be broken." But the thought occurs that there is nothing wrong with stopping and taking stock of our lives at any time of the year, and making resolutions to live lives that are more deeply devoted to Christ. If this is done seriously, and with prayer about our intentions, what we are really doing is repenting and resolving to do better in the future with the help of our God. It may very well be that "New Years" is as good a time as any to stop and take a careful look at our lives, and resolve to change whatever is lacking in them that we might glorify the God who gives us our years.

There is something refreshing about "New Years," simply because it is new! But there is a real sense in which every day is something fresh and new, and therefore we do not have to wait until the end of a year to make spiritual changes in our lives. As a matter of fact, these changes should come to us daily. Every day and in every way we should draw closer and closer to God. The closer we draw to God, the further Satan will flee from us. This is a promise of sacred Scripture.

We wish to take this opportunity to wish each of you a very **HAPPY NEW YEAR**. It is our hope and prayer that in this new year the church has more peace, preaches the Gospel more zealously, finds more people around the world converted to our lovely Christ, and finds herself more completely devoted to Christ than in any of the years that have passed through the door of time until now. Join us in such a prayer, and join us in doing our part to see that this comes to pass.

*By D. Gene West*