

New Beginnings

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have stepped into a new year. New calendars are in place in anticipation of plans to be made, events to celebrate and things to get done. We need to remind ourselves to write 2017 on everything that needs a date starting in January, rather than write 2016 out of habit. Of course, those wonderful income tax forms are soon to arrive, as well!

Although we live a day at a time, a new year holds the promise of new beginnings. Like a blank sheet of paper, a new year represents new opportunities, new possibilities and new beginnings. We can look past the mistakes of 2016, and we can try to do better in 2017. Rather than just continuing on today as we did yesterday, perhaps giving no thought about making our lives better and more meaningful than before, a new year beckons us to overcome the problems of last year and to make better use of our resources. Of course, we know there will be problems in 2017 as well, but perhaps our alternatives will offer better solutions, a different perspective and more positive results than before. A new year begs us to look at its potential for good.

It's this kind of spirit also from which we should approach 2017 spiritually. We don't have to continue in the sins of the past. There is renewal in Christ, whether in obedience to the Gospel or in rededication to Christian living. We can look at life differently than before. This year, our theme where I worship and serve Jesus Christ is “Let the love of God be seen in 2017.” God shows His love for us every day, both with physical blessings and having all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). What a great time for our love for Him and for each other to be seen, not just as a feeling, but as a positive response to living in the love of God. May we seek to be, from a heart of love and gratitude towards God and His Son, all that we can be in Christ and all that we can be to each other. Love is not just an attitude, but it is an action. How can we not respond to God's love, who has shown that love, not just in who He is, but also in what He has done for us (John 3:16)? “Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18). Hearts of gratitude to God's response of love should overflow in responding to His good will for our lives. “If you love Me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15).

If we begin anew in Christ, 2017 will be so much better than what has come before. You will have your Lord with you, your brothers and sisters encouraging you, and a much better perspective on life in general. Will you make 2017 a year of commitment in the love of God and find God's blessings for you? “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.”

By Robert Johnson