

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXXI

January 31, 2021

No. 05

Beginning The New Year In Christ

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A new year has dawned, but how much is new? A month into 2021, many of the clouds of 2020 are still around. Concerns of Covid-19 have not ceased to occupy our minds. Wearing masks and pumping sanitizers have not withdrawn in the turn of the calendar. Promised vaccines are becoming available, but many are still in line to receive their first dose. Some are waiting for the needed second dose, delayed by the lack of local availability. Fear and depression continue to dominate public emotions. Home quarantining continues to put our normal lives on hold. It has been a month now... where is the sunshine 2021?

There is something invigorating in absorbing the dawn of a new year. But low hanging clouds seem to be blocking the view. Our soul needs more than ever to look up and see the blessings of beginning a new year in Christ.

In Christ, we have true forgiveness. Thanksgiving fills our hearts when we realize the vast change God has provided for us in Christ. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and places us in the kingdom of His Son (*Colossians 1:13*). It is in God's Son "*in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins*" (*Colossians 1:14*).

When God forgives, no part of our transgression is ever held against us again. Under the covenant of Christ, the prophecy of Jeremiah is realized. God says, "*For I will be merciful to their iniquities and their sins will I remember no more*" (*Hebrews 8:12*). How vast is forgiveness? "*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us*" (*Psalms 103:12*).

In Christ, we have a spiritual outlook. Paul writes, "*Wherefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold they are become new*" (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). By looking at the prior verse, we can see the point of Paul's "Wherefore." He is emphasizing how the new man in Christ looks at others as seen from this statement: "*Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more*" (*2 Corinthians 5:16*).

Outside of Christ, our view of man would be according to his or her race, or social position. Jesus may have been viewed as a Jew, and to many the Jewish leader who was to redeem His people from Roman dominance in a secular world. But Paul says, after Jesus' death and resurrection, he no longer viewed Jesus from a fleshly point of view,

exclusively. Our redemption is spiritual. Therefore, our insight should incorporate a discerning spiritual perspective.

Such insight is instructive. Paul considered his afflictions as "*light*" because he looked "*not at the things which are seen, but as the things which are not seen.*" He focused on the more glorious "*eternal*" realities that helped him overcome the "*temporal*" setbacks (*2 Corinthians 4:17-18*).

In Christ, we have room for growth. Regardless of our spiritual maturity as we end a year, we always can begin a new year in Christ realizing areas where growth and improvement are needed. We should look at the new year as an opportunity to be "*increasing in the knowledge of God*" (*Col.1:10*). Our faith in Christ has room to add "*virtue,*" "*knowledge,*" "*self-control,*" "*patience,*" "*godliness,*" brotherly kindness," and "*love*" (*2 Pet. 1:5-7*). Regardless of who we are, we have room to grow or "*abound*" in these characteristics towards spiritual maturity. Make 2021 the year you grow in these spiritual qualities.

Christ is "*our hope*" (*1 Timothy 1:2*). Hope through forgiveness unto the expectation of Heaven is a wonderful way to begin any year. Are you in Christ (*cf. Galatians 3:26-27*)?