

I Need A New Year

2 Corinthians 5:17

January 3, 2021

Welcome again to worship today, January 3, 2021. Yeah!

I'm so glad it's 2021. I know we still are dealing with a pandemic and uncertainties, but this year has got to be better than last year.

In fact, a friend of mine on Facebook has already declared it. He posted a picture of the final score of Friday night's Ohio State's crushing defeat of Clemson and wrote, "2021 is only one day old and it has already surpassed 2020!" Can I get an "Amen" for that?

People are ready for this new year because 2020 stunk so bad.

I read about a poll that's evidently always taken at the end of the year asking what people thought of the previous year. The results over several years seem to average out that half of the people thought the previous year was good, while the other half thought it was bad. Kind of the glass is half full or half empty thing. But for 2020, it was something around 70% who thought it was a bad year. Ok, getting 70% of Americans agreeing on something is in fact somewhat shy of a miracle, but my immediate question was, "What did the 30% see that was good in 2020?"

I guess it's like something I witnessed this past spring. I was doing an online training for Annual Conference, and to practice virtual voting, we pastors were asked – on two separate occasions – if we liked social distancing or not. Something like 28% of pastors liked social distancing, and I was floored. I think I yelled out, "Are you kidding me?" A big part of our ministry as pastors is to be **with** people, not distance ourselves from them.

So, yeah, I need a new year, and in this new year, I want to be different.

I want us to consider a passage of Scripture that you should memorize so that you can have with you at all times. It is from 2 Corinthians 5:17:

*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*¹

The NIV translates it this way:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*²

Folks, when Christ comes into our lives, we are a *kahee-nos' ktis'-is*,³ a new creature. A fresh start is made.

In this new year, I want to be different, a new person, a new creation. And since the new year is a time for resolutions, I want to suggest to you 4 areas you might think about being a new person, a new creation.

First, we need a new body.

It is fascinating to me how God designed certain creatures to go through a metamorphosis as they move from one form to a completely different one. I think He does this to show us how we can change as well. We are not stuck in the past.

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT2)

² 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

³ καινός κτίσις

For example, frogs hatch from eggs into aquatic larvae called tadpoles that have tails and internal gills. They can only live in the water; take away the water, and they cannot breathe. But then tadpoles begin to change. They develop legs and lungs until they can leave the water and breathe air. Many of us probably had science classes that watched this metamorphosis.

Now, I'm not suggested you revert to a tadpole, but I am suggesting you consider a new body in 2021. That might mean losing weight and exercising more. It might be developing a new skill or hobby, something new to explore. Find something new that brings you benefits to your health, physical or mental.

Paul told the Christians in Corinth:

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself.⁴

After 2020 and a year of unhealth, do something to improve your body. I'm going to lose some weight and walk hand-in-hand more with my wife. I want to finish the sequel to "Hanging On", I'd love to publish the children's book I've written, and maybe start on the historical fiction trilogy that is simmering in my mind.

What will you do to be a new person, a new creation, in your body in 2021?

Second, we need a new mind.

Isn't it something to watch as a human being matures? I have watched my sons from the moment they breathed their first breaths. In the beginning, they could do nothing except pee and poop on themselves. We always had to have a towel – not a burp rag – but a towel because they both spit up so much.

But now, they are out on their own, making their own decisions, working out the complexities of human relationships, business, and self-realization.

We humans go from knowing nothing to pondering the mysteries of the galaxy. Amazing, isn't it?

I want to recommend you develop a new mind in 2021. Fill your mind with new thoughts. Study something new. Read more.

MY NEW READING.

I want to continue to read in 2021.

Of course, Paul has some specific recommendations about this mind. Philippians 4:8 says:

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.⁵

He also says in Romans 12:2:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.⁶

Be a new person, a new creation, in 2021. Have a new mind that is transformed away from the pattern of the world, and instead focuses on what is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.

What will you do to be a new person, a new creation, in your mind in 2021?

⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:19, NLT2

⁵ Philippians 4:8, NLT2

⁶ Romans 12:2 (NIV)

Third, we need a new spirit.

Have you ever thought about an acorn and its potential to become a mighty oak tree? An oak tree can reach a height of over 200 feet, with the trunk alone 145 feet in height. The Seven Sisters Oak is the largest certified southern live oak tree. Located in Mandeville, Louisiana, it is estimated to be up to 1,500 years old with a trunk that measures 38 feet around. All that size and strength, and it all started with a single acorn.

May I suggest you consider a new spirit in 2021. This last year was filled with fear, rancor, hatred, violence, and uncertainty. It seems as if the devil has been running amok this past year, so let's be new people, new creations this year. Let's have a spirit of love and peace, friendship and understanding. Let us have the spirit of God's Holy Spirit within us in this new year.

Hear these words from Colossians 1:9:

*So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.*⁷

What will you do to be a new person, a new creation, in your spirit in 2021?

Finally, we need a new soul.

The caterpillar becoming a butterfly has long been symbolic of the new person, the new creation in Christ. The caterpillar is a worm-like creature relegated to the ground, but one day, it will go through its own metamorphosis, become a butterfly, and fly.

My friends, 2020 tested our souls, our faith, our confidence in the Lord. It was a year of trial, and it revealed much about our walk with Christ.

I want to strongly recommend you seek a new soul, a deeper relationship with the Lord in 2021.

The Psalmist wrote:

*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.*⁸

I hope and pray that your soul will long for God.

Listen to what the Lord said in Isaiah

*For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.*⁹

2021 is a new year, ready for new people, new creations.

⁷ Colossians 1:9, NLT2

⁸ Psalm 42:1-2, NIV

⁹ Isaiah 43:19 (NLT2)