

New Year - New You

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[0 : 00] Well, we can with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling. If we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

And if we take as our text the words of verse 17. 2 Corinthians 5 at verse 17.

You know, by the start of a new year, there is always the desire, the drive, sometimes even the determination for a new you.

A new year and a new you. Because the truth is, well, we all overindulged. We all overindulged during the festive period.

And now we all feel, well, it's a new year. It's time for change. It's 2022. We've lived for the past two years through a pandemic which isn't over yet.

[1 : 27] But it's all had an impact upon us. Whether we want to admit it or not, it's had an impact upon us mentally, physically, and also spiritually. And at the start of a new year, there's often this desire, this drive, this determination for a new you.

And needless to say, it's good for our well-being. It's good for our well-being to get more exercise, to lose weight, to eat healthily, to cut down on alcohol, to stop smoking, to read our Bible more, and to come to church regularly.

All these things are good for us. And they will help us live healthier and happier lives. But, you know, I'll never forget the advice that one doctor gave at the beginning of a new year.

And his advice was very, very simple. He said, look up. Look up. The doctor said, we spend our lives looking down.

We look down at the TV. We look down at our phone. We look down at our tablet. We look down at our laptop. We look down at other people. We spend our lives looking down.

[2 : 34] And the doctor suggested that our New Year's resolution should be that we should look up. Look up. And, you know, my friend, that's a very biblical New Year's resolution, isn't it?

Because, you know, in our sin, in our stress, in our suffering, our sickness, and in our sorrow, our Bible always encourages us and exhorts us to stop looking down and start looking up.

Start looking up. So, my friend, a New Year's resolution for you is simple. Look up. Look up. Begin 2022 the right way.

And look to Jesus. Lift your eyes to Jesus. Live for Jesus. Love Jesus. Lean upon Jesus. Begin 2022 the right way.

For some of you, begin 2022 by coming to Christianity Explored. Come. Just come. Come to church morning and evening.

[3 : 40] Come to the midweek meeting. There's nothing to be scared about. Read and pray daily. Follow a daily reading plan. Get involved in your congregation.

Get involved in your community. My friend, begin 2022 the right way. Look up. It's a new year. And the Bible says, well, this is a new you.

And, you know, Paul reminds us here that when you look up, he says in verse 17 that you enter a new position. You become a new person. And you have a new purpose.

When you look up, you enter a new position. You become a new person. And you have a new purpose. And they're our headings this morning as we look at verse 17.

A new position, a new person, and a new purpose. A new year, a new you. A new position, a new person, a new purpose. So, look first of all, at a new position.

[4 : 45] A new position. Paul says in verse 17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come.

He says, if anyone is in Christ. Now, I often say that the phrase that large doors often swing on small hinges.

And in the Bible, large theological truths always swing on small words. And you can't get much smaller than the word in. What Paul says here, in Christ.

If anyone is in Christ. And with this small word, Paul is reminding us that when you're a Christian, when you look up, when you look to Jesus, lift your eyes to Jesus, live for Jesus, love Jesus, and lean upon Jesus, when you're a Christian, everything you have as a Christian, and everything you are as a Christian, is because you are in Christ.

You are in Christ. You're in, as the Bible says, you are in union with Christ. You are united to Jesus Christ. He is yours, and you are His. You are in union with Christ.

[5 : 58] And because of your union with Christ, Jesus provides for you every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. And you know, Paul here, Paul the Apostle, he loves this concept of union with Christ.

Because he writes about it in almost every letter. And what he says to us is that when you're a Christian, when you look up, when you look to Jesus, you're in Christ.

You are with Christ. And my friend, Paul emphasizes how precious your salvation is because of your new position in Christ, your union with Christ.

But you know, although we're noticing what Paul does say here, he says that if anyone is in Christ, we have to notice what Paul doesn't say. Paul doesn't say if anyone comes to church, or if anyone watches online, or if anyone prays, or if anyone reads their Bible, or if anyone went to Sunday school when they were a child, or if anyone is a minister, or if anyone is an elder, or if anyone is a member in the church.

Paul doesn't say any of that. Paul doesn't say if anyone is anything. No, Paul says if anyone is in Christ. That's the key to all of this.

[7 : 19] If anyone is in Christ, then you are a new creation. And you have a new position. Because to be in Christ, it's very simple.

To be in Christ is to believe in Jesus Christ. Not with your head, but with your heart. To be in Christ is to confess your sin, and to confess Jesus as your Savior.

To be in Christ is to trust Jesus with your life, and to trust Jesus with your death. To be in Christ, my friend, is to be washed in His blood. It's to be clothed in His righteousness.

It's to be adopted into His family. To be in Christ, to be in union with this wonderful Savior, is to be committed to Him, and connected to Him as your Savior.

Now, before you discount and disqualify yourself this morning, and say, well, that's not me, Murdo. That's not me. I want you to just look at what Paul says here.

[8 : 19] Look at what Paul says in verse 17. He says, If anyone. If anyone. Therefore, this is for anyone.

This is for you. Whether you're here today or at home. Whether you're in Christ or still out of Christ. Whether you're a Christian friend or an unconverted friend.

Whether you're saved or not. Whether you're looking up or haven't started looking up yet. Whether you're confessing or committed or connected to Jesus Christ or not. Paul says, This is for you.

Because this is for anyone. If anyone, he says. And this is for anyone because everyone who is in Christ today began life out of Christ.

This is for anyone because everyone in Christ today began life out of Christ. And you know that to be true, my Christian friend, don't you?

[9 : 25] You were once an unconverted friend. You were once an unconverted friend. I was an unconverted friend. I lived my life graceless and godless.

No thought of eternity. No care for my soul. There was a day when we were all unconverted friends. We weren't always in Christ. There was a day when we were all out of Christ.

And you know, we said earlier that Psalm 1 was the churchgoer psalm because there are only two types of people who come to church. Only two types of people who watch online.

There are those who are blessed and those who are cursed. Those who are righteous and those who are still unrighteous. There's the godly and the ungodly. There's the saved and the unsaved. There's the saint and the sinner.

But as you know, these two types of people, they not only come to church, they're everywhere in the world. There are only two types of people in the world. And they're in one of two positions.

[10 : 24] They're either in Christ or still out of Christ. And you know which position you are in this morning. I don't need to tell you. You know if you're in Christ and you know if you're out of Christ.

And if you're out of Christ, your Bible says to you that you're not only out of Christ, you are still in Adam. That's how the Bible describes it.

You are still in Adam. If you're not in union with Christ, you are in union with the first Adam. And here's the bad news.

The bad news that no one wants to hear. Your position in Adam leads to death. Not only physical death, but spiritual death and eternal death in hell.

My friend, that's your starting position. That was my starting position. In addition, we were born in Adam. And because we were born in Adam, all that was true of Adam was true of me and true of you.

[11 : 30] Because when Adam sinned, we sinned. When Adam fell, we fell. When Adam was subjected to death, we were subjected to death. When Adam was condemned, we were condemned.

When Adam was cursed by the fall, we were cursed by the fall. And this is the teaching of our catechism. It's the teaching of the Bible. But our catechism tells us that all mankind, descending from Adam, we sinned in him.

We fell with him in his first transgression. And our catechism explains to us the misery and the mess of the fall. It says that all mankind, all of us, we lost communion with God.

We are under his wrath and curse. We are made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever. That's our starting point.

That's the bad news. But you know, my friend, in order to know how good the good news is, you have to understand, first of all, how bad the bad news is. And Paul tells us the bad news, that we're all born in Adam.

[12 : 41] But then Paul gives to us here the good news of the gospel. And he says that if anyone, if any of you are in Christ, if anyone is a Christian, if anyone looks up to Jesus, if anyone lifts their eyes to Jesus, if anyone lives for Jesus and loves Jesus and leans upon Jesus, if anyone confesses their sin and commits their life to the Savior, they're in a new position.

They're in a new position. They're no longer in Adam. They are positioned in Christ. And you know, Paul, he put it so succinctly in 1 Corinthians 15, when he said, As in Adam all die, but in Christ shall all be made alive.

As in Adam all die, but in Christ shall all be made alive. Which means that when you're in Christ, when you're a Christian, you receive everything that Christ has.

The Bible tells us that when you are in Christ, you're chosen in Christ. You're redeemed in Christ. You're made righteous in Christ. You're adopted in Christ.

You're accepted in Christ. There's no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. More than that, the Bible says you have an inheritance in Christ.

[14 : 06] You're joint heirs with Christ. My friend, when you are in Christ, you're crucified with Christ. You're dead with Christ.

You're buried with Christ. You're raised with Christ. You're seated in heavenly places in Christ. When you're in Christ, your life is in Christ. Christ. All that belongs to Jesus is yours because of your new position in Christ.

And you know, my friend, there's no better position to be in today than to be in Christ. And so Paul says to you, look up. Look up.

Because when you look up, you enter a new position. And when you look up, you become a new person. You become a new person. That's what we see secondly. So a new position and a new person.

A new person. Paul says, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come.

[15 : 16] My friend, this is good news. It's good news because when you look up, when you look to Jesus and lift your eyes to Jesus and live for Jesus and love Jesus and lean upon Jesus, when you confess your sin and commit your life to the Savior, you enter not only a new position, but you become a new person.

And you become a new person not because something superficial has happened, not because something on the surface has changed, but because something special, something spiritual has taken place in your heart and in your life.

when you look up, you become a new person. Not by reformation, not by renovation, but by regeneration. The old person isn't just reformed. It's not a remake. It's not a makeover. It's not a renovation. Paul says, the old person is replaced. You become a new creation. In Christ, you're a new creation. And that word new that Paul uses here, he says, it's new of a totally different kind, new of a totally different quality, new of a totally different value.

[16:29] You are a new creation. You're brand new. Yes, you have the same body with all the same feelings. You live in the same home. You have the same family, the same job.

But on the inside, on the inside, there's an entirely new you. You know, I remember when I was converted, the sky was bluer and the grass was greener.

And it's because it was all new. The old had passed away. It all became new. That's what Paul says. If anyone is in Christ, if anyone is a Christian, you are a new creation.

My friend, Paul is teaching us here about the new birth. He's teaching us about what it means to be born again. Because when you're born again, you become a new person.

You become a new creation. And it's not a reformation. It's not a renovation. It's regeneration. It's not a superficial transformation. It's a spiritual transformation.

[17:37] And you remember that it was Jesus. It was Jesus who taught about the new birth in John 3 when he had that nighttime meeting with Nicodemus. And Jesus said to Nicodemus, he said to him, you must, you must be born again because unless you're born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.

And Nicodemus, like many other people, Nicodemus struggled with this because he was only thinking in superficial terms. But Jesus was teaching spiritual truths.

Jesus was teaching that when you're born again, you're given a new birth and a new beginning. You're given a new, a new head to see Jesus, a new heart to seek Jesus, and new hands to serve Jesus.

It's a spiritual birth which brings about a spiritual transformation. It's a work of the Holy Spirit where you're made a new person and you're given a new birth and a new beginning.

And it's a new beginning because you're brought from death in Adam to life in Christ. You're brought from darkness to light, from the dungeon to liberty.

[18:47] And that's why Paul says the old in Adam, the old has passed away and all becomes new. because when you become a new creation and a new person in Christ, you're not the person you once were.

Because as Paul teaches, the old person has died. The old man is dead. The old woman is dead. The old Adam in you is dead. Yes, there's this constant battle.

And don't ever think that Christians are perfect. Never have that view. They are far from perfect because there is this constant battle when you become a Christian that the old things are always there but they shall battle.

They pass away but we're still battling away. And you know, it's interesting that this word old that Paul uses here, he talks about new and then he talks about the old.

And the word old is, where do we get the word archaeology from? As you know, an archaeologist is someone who digs up things from the past. They dig up fragments of history and bones and pots, all these things from long ago.

[20:00] And that's what Paul is saying. Paul is saying that when you're in Christ, when you're a Christian, when you look up, when you lift your eyes to Jesus, when you confess your sin and commit your life to the Savior, your former life, your old life is gone.

It's in the past. It's a new beginning. It's a new start. Everything in the past is ancient history. The Bible says it's dead and buried. It's literally passed away.

And as you know, that's the phrase we often use for when someone dies. We say that they've passed away. And that's what Paul says happens when you become a Christian. Your old self, the old man or woman in you, the old lifestyle, the old life, it dies, it passes away and perishes.

Because when you experience and enjoy a new birth and a new beginning, you know, your old values, they're no longer as valuable.

Your old loves are no longer as lovely. Your old beliefs, they're buried. Your old passions and priorities and pursuits and practices and principles and plans.

[21 : 16] They all perish. They're a thing of the past. They're ancient history. And of course, as we said, that doesn't mean you're sinless because there will be trials, there will be temptations to take your focus off Christ.

That's the devil's ploy. You know, in fact, it was C.S. Lewis. He said, he said, the devil is a grave digger. You talk about dying and being buried in Christ.

The devil is a grave digger, he says, and the devil will dig up your past and he will dig up what you once were, but you must remember that God has buried what you once were in Adam.

He says, the devil is a digger. I'll read it again. The devil is a digger and the devil will dig up your past. He will dig up what you once were, but you must remember. You must remember every day that God has buried what you once were in Adam.

My friend, when you're born again, you become a new creation in Christ. You become a new person. You're given a new birth and a new beginning. And that should affect every area of your life.

[22 : 32] It doesn't just affect your little religion box that you have where you read your Bible and you pray and you reschedule your week and to include two church services on the Lord's Day and maybe midweek.

It's much more than that because it's all encompassing. When you enjoy and experience a new birth and a new beginning, it should affect every area of your life.

It should affect all your relationships, your relationship with your spouse and your siblings, your family, your friends, your work, your witness, your worship. It should affect your character, your conduct, your conversation.

When you are a new person in Christ, when you are a new creation, that change should affect your entire life. Because when you're in Christ, everything should be about Christ.

That's not to say you have to be thinking about Him all day. But everything. He is, it means that He is first in your life. and you are last. He is, He is the one who must increase and you must decrease.

[23 : 43] He is the one who must have supremacy and you must have submission. Because that's what it is to be a Christian. It is to submit and surrender your life to Jesus.

But you know, what Paul makes clear here is that when you're a new person in Christ, when you're a new creation, when you're a Christian, the old has to go and the new has to come.

That's what he says. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. So the old has to go.

The new has to come. Because if the new comes, but the old doesn't go, if we're not putting to death the sins of the flesh, if we're not killing off this sin and confessing it, if the new comes and the old doesn't go, the Bible says that's a contradiction.

In fact, the Bible calls that hypocrisy. And that's one thing a Christian isn't to be, is a hypocrite. The Christian isn't to live life with the new while still keeping a hand on the old.

The Christian isn't to love God and then do as they please. No, Paul puts it very clear here. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

[25 : 06] The old has passed away. It's died. The new has come. My friend, when you look up, when you enter a new position, you become a new person and you also have a new purpose.

And that's our last heading. A new position, a new person, and then lastly, a new purpose. A new purpose. Paul says in verse 17, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

And you know, my friend, looking at these verses, Paul is teaching us how to begin 2022 the right way. And he's saying to us very simply, look up.

Because when you look up, you enter a new position. You become a new person and you have a new purpose. And you have a new purpose because when you're in Christ, when you're a Christian, he says, you have received the ministry of reconciliation.

[26 : 14] And Paul explains what the ministry of reconciliation is in verse 19. He says, that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation.

Paul says that as those who were once enemies and at enmity with God when we were in Adam, he says that as a Christian, you have now been reconciled to God.

You've been reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You are now in a relationship with God. You have a new position. You've been made a new person. And now you

have a new purpose.

You have a new purpose where as you look to Jesus and live for Jesus and love Jesus and lean upon him, you have a new purpose. You have been entrusted with a ministry and a message of reconciliation.

Therefore, says Paul, verse 20, we are ambassadors for Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ. God is making his appeal through us.

[27 : 22] Let's make this personal. Through you. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For your sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him you might become the righteousness of God.

Do you know my Christian friend here this morning as someone who is no longer in Adam but now in Christ? As someone who is a new creation and you should never forget that you are a new creation.

As someone with a new birth and a new beginning, as someone with a new position and is a new person, you have a new purpose. And your new purpose, although you might have been a Christian for many years, your new purpose this new year is that you are an ambassador for Christ.

You are a representative of King Jesus. You are a witness of the Savior. You are to represent this King in your congregation and in your community.

You are a delegate and a disciple of the Savior among your friends and your family. You are to be a witness for Christ in your workplace. That's your new passion. That should be your new position and purpose.

[28 : 42] You are an ambassador for Christ. That's your message and that's your ministry. It's a message and ministry of reconciliation. Where Paul says, God is making His appeal through you.

Which means that God wants to use you. You might think, oh, I'm useless for God. I can't do anything for Him. But God wants to use you where He has placed you.

You're the only person with your family. You're the only person who might be in a certain workplace, the only Christian there. He has placed you there for a purpose and He wants to use you to make His message known to others.

And the ministry you've been given and the message that you're to bring is as Paul says here, we implore you, we urge you, we plead with you, we encourage you, we exhort you, be reconciled to God.

Be in Christ. You know, your ministry, your message is simple. You're telling other people, look up. Stop looking down. Start looking up.

[29 : 56] You want to find answers for life? Stop looking down. Start looking up. That's your ministry and your message is telling people, confess your sin, commit your life to the Savior. Look up.

Look to Jesus. Lift your eyes to Jesus. Live for Jesus. Love Jesus. Lean upon Jesus. Look up. Look up. But you know, the reason Paul says all this, and with this I'll close, you know, everything Paul says here about our ministry and our message, it's all with that eternal perspective.

Paul isn't just looking at tomorrow. Paul is looking at eternity. And he has been doing that for the past number of chapters. In chapter 4, Paul said that our ministry and message, he said, our gospel, if our gospel is hidden, it's only hidden to those who are lost.

If our Christian witness is veiled, he says, it's only veiled to those who are lost. Because the things that are seen, he says, are just temporal. But remember, the things that are unseen, they are eternal.

And you know, Paul has this urgency. He has an eternal perspective. He has an urgency. That's why he said in verse 10, he said, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due, for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

[31 : 27] Therefore, knowing the fear or the terror of the Lord, we persuade others. Paul has this urgency. He has this eternal perspective that we're not promised tomorrow.

And he's telling us, he's encouraging us, he's urging us to be urgent because there are people perishing all around us and entering eternity.

And you know, that's not something we should shrug our shoulders at. You know, our ministry and our message should be filled with motivation and a missionary mindset because with a new year, there is a need for a new you.

With a new year, there is a need for a new you. And Paul says here, look up. Look up. And you know, my unconverted friend, here is a biblical New Year's resolution for you. Stop looking down. Start looking up. Start looking up. Begin 2022 the right way. [32 : 40] Look to Jesus. Lift your eyes to Jesus. Love Jesus. Live for Jesus. Lean upon Jesus. Confess your sin.

Commit your life to the Savior. Look up. Because when you do, you will enter a new position. You will become a new person.

And you will have a new purpose. This is a new year. Paul says, this is a new you. He says to us, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. All has become new. A new year. A new you. And may the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for the wonder of the gospel. that we are those who have sinned in Adam and yet we are able to be forgiven in Christ.

[33 : 51] That we are able to be united to Jesus and receive all these blessings and benefits from them. And Lord, although we may not understand them all fully and although we may not have experienced them yet, help us, we pray, to see that this is the great call of the gospel, to come and be in Christ, to come and look up, to look to Jesus and to live for Jesus each and every day.

Because Lord, we realize that in this world we do not know what a day nor an hour will bring, but we give thanks to Thee that Thou art one who does and that we can live every day walking with the Lord, walking with Him and listening to His voice, knowing that He is one who speaks to us in His word.

Lord, bless us, we pray. Bless us, Lord, as individuals. Remember us as a congregation.

Remember us as homes and families. And Lord, we pray that each and every one of us that we would all be in Christ, that we would all be Christians, that we would all be followers of Jesus because to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Lord, do us good and we pray. Go before us. Keep us, we pray, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing to God's praise in Psalm 34.

Psalm 34. It's in the Scottish Psalter, page 247. We're singing from verse 5 down to the verse marked 10.

[35 : 43] Psalm 34 at verse 5. They looked to him and lightened were, not shamed were their faces. This poor man cried, God heard and saved him from all his distresses.

This is someone who looked up. He looked up. And as it says in verse 8, this is the encouragement. He says to us, O taste and see that God is good, who trusts in Him is blessed.

Fear God His saints, none that in fear shall be with want oppressed. So verses 5 to 10 of Psalm 34 to God's praise. aisle.

proportion hand be dirt and sea in bright distressing dieed And roundeth the past fair All those above that do fear From them the river Would gaze and see that God is good Who trusts in their rest Fear God is sin

And roundeth the past fair Shall be with heart of rest The lions young may hungry be And they may have their food And may that rule in sin The Lord shall talk again in sin The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all now and forevermore Amen Amen