

New Year's Resolution

"Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:13–14 (ESV)

At New Year's we may look back on a year that has been terrible. We see the many mistakes, the missed opportunities, the people we hurt, the relationships we have destroyed. We want to look forward to a new year in which all these things will be changed. We desperately want to start out on the right foot. We want to do things differently. We want to be changed. Sometimes that is just a ridiculous fantasy. But God has put in the human heart a desire for real change, permanent change. Paul shows us that Jesus makes real change possible. The Holy Spirit produces the kind of change that is anchored in eternity with all its joy, love, and fulfillment. We must first put our past in Jesus's hands. We must confess our errors and sins. We must turn to Jesus and ask him to continue His work in us. We must avoid self-pity and self-denunciation. Instead, we must be caught up in the wonderful, finished work of Jesus Christ who has saved sinners by his death on the cross. We must be poor in spirit and mourn over our sin. Being poor in spirit does not mean being depressed or

to engage in self-recrimination. It means that we recognize that we are terrible sinners who need a Savior. As the great scientist John Newton said: "Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior." Depression and self-recrimination put us at the center of things. Being poor in Spirit puts Christ at the center.

We must be grateful for and astounded by the wonderful, finished work of Jesus Christ who has saved sinners by His death on the cross. The secret to the kind of change Paul describes in this passage is that we think less of ourselves and more about Jesus. We are less caught up in self-recrimination and more caught up in thankfulness and praise for the work of Jesus Christ. He has saved us from our sins. Our salvation is based on His finished work. He is also making us new through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Self-recrimination and self-congratulation are both enemies of the type of spiritual change Paul is talking about here. Because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on our behalf we don't need to run from the past. We can look at our past and rejoice in the fact that the blood of Christ covers our past. Moreover, by the power of the Holy Spirit we can face the present and the future knowing that the God who loves us

enough to die on the cross for us indwells us by His Spirit to guide us and help us day by day. Sometimes the change is dramatic, but more often it is gradual. It is one day at a time. One step at a time. Not always steady, but nonetheless progressive because the Holy Spirit is never a failure. We know that one day we will awaken in Christ's likeness, and we shall see Him as He is. His righteousness blots out our sin. His love transforms our hard hearts. His success wipes out our failures. His glory overshadows our meanness. That is why we hope. That is why every New Year, indeed every day, should point us to Christ. We shall be transformed! "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" *Isaiah 43:18-19*

We are awash in the omnipresence of God's love and grace.

The proof of our brokenness before God is our need to forgive people who have wronged us and our desire to seek the forgiveness of those we have wronged or offended. The reality of the eternity we have in Jesus makes every New Year vibrant with possibilities. Our present and our future are anchored in Jesus. "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." *1 Corinthians 2:2 (ESV)*