

“THIS YEAR ALSO”

It is now the second day of 2022. We have begun another new year. There have been a number of wonderful blessings we enjoyed this past year. There have also been a number of challenges we have had to face. We can look back with a sense of great gratitude. We can look back with a sense of great sorrow and loss. As the new year begins, there is probably going to be a lot of the same. There will be both joy and sorrow, successes and failures. The question to ask is this: How are you and I going to respond to this year?

In Luke 13, Jesus tells a parable of a man “*who had a fig tree planted in his vineyard*” (Luke 13.6). Over the course of three years, this man had returned to his vineyard and examined the fig tree only to find that it produced no fruit. Now after the third year, he decided to “*cut it down; why does it use up the ground*” (Luke 13.7). Notice how the caretaker of the vineyard responded. He said, “*Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down*” (Luke 13.8,9). Here is a fig tree that had produced no fruit year after year, and the caretaker of the vineyard wanted to give it one more year to see if this next year will be any different.

I suggest that in many ways, this year will be the same as last year. Just like last year, this year also will be a year of successes and failures. Have you made any new year’s resolution – just like last year? Have you determined to read your Bible every day? Pray more often? Come to Bible class and worship services more consistently? ...just like last year? Have you dealt with hardships and challenges last year that you never thought you would overcome? But then with the help of both your physical and spiritual family, you were able to get through them? This year also will come with difficulties, but you will be able to overcome.

Last year was both a wonder and difficult year. This year also will be the same. So be prepared to be amazed at the wonderful ways your life will be blessed. And be prepared to have your heart broken. And as always, look to God and your family with a heart of thanksgiving and for help regardless of what you encounter. CLP

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*“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners,
but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the
household of God” (Eph. 2:19)*

January 2, 2022

MEETING TIMES:

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS : 9:00 AM

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP: 9:50 AM

SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP: 6:00 PM

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS 7:30 PM

TRAINING THE CONSCIENCE

The conscience is that feeling or sense within us that provokes feelings of guilt when we have done that which we believe is wrong.

It is important to note that the conscience, by itself, is not adequate enough to tell the difference between right and wrong. Indeed, there are times when one may break the laws of God, but because he did not perceive them as sin, his conscience would not be bothered. Although Paul tried to destroy the church, he confessed that “*I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day*” (Acts 23.1).

In contrast, the conscience may be bothered by something that is not against the laws of God. Under the Old Law, the Jews were forbidden to eat meat sacrificed to idols. But under the law of Christ, no such restriction was in place. However, because their conscience had been trained that eating certain meats was sinful, it bothered their conscience to do so. (1 Cor. 8.7,8).

How do we train our conscience? We train it by the word of God. Paul wrote that he was not lying, “*my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit*” (Rom. 9.1). When we are influenced by the Holy Spirit (the word of God), the scriptures confirm our guilt or our innocence. CLP

A NEW YEAR – A NEW YOU

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

INTRODUCTION:

1. **2 CORINTHIANS 5:17:** *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away...”*
 - a) New (kainos): New in the sense of better. (cf. John 13.34)
 - b) Passed Away: Gone by the wayside. (cf. 2 Pet. 3.10)
 - c) Have Become: Describes a continuous state of being.
2. What is the process of our becoming a better person?

I. A CONDITION

- A. **2 CORINTHIANS 5:17:** *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ.”*
 1. A condition is when something has to happen that triggers a consequence. If this, then that.
 2. Becoming a new creation is conditioned on my being in Christ. *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”*
- B. How does one get into Christ? (Gal. 3.26,27)
 1. **GALATIANS 3:26:** *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”* Believe in Jesus.
 2. **GALATIANS 3:27:** *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*
 - a) For (gar): Because. I am a child of God by faith because I did something.
 - b) Baptized into Christ: What puts me into Christ is a faith that moves me to be baptized.

II. A LOCATION

- A. **2 CORINTHIANS 5:17:** *“If anyone is in Christ.”*
 1. **EPHESIANS 1.3:** *“all spiritual blessings in Christ.”*
 2. **EPHESIANS 1.4:** *“just as He chose us in Him.”*
 3. **EPHESIANS 1.5,6:** *“accepted in the Beloved.”*
 4. **EPHESIANS 1.7:** *“In Him we have redemption.”*
 5. **EPHESIANS 2.7:** *“riches of His grace...in Christ Jesus.”*
- B. **GALATIANS 6.15:** *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything...”*
 1. God does not care if you are a Jew or a Gentile
 2. *“...but a new creation.”* God wants you to be new.

CONCLUSION: What compels you to become a new creation? The love of Christ (2 Cor. 5.14; Isa. 53.5)!

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

In 1 Corinthians 15.29, the Holy Spirit makes this statement: *“Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all?”* If you put this into the context, there were those who denied that there would be a resurrection. In response, the apostle Paul defends the fact that there will be a resurrection based on the fact that Jesus was resurrected (1 Cor. 15.20). Part of this argumentation is this: If there is no resurrection, when what is the point of those being baptized for the dead?

It is in this one statement that the doctrine of Mormonism teaches that one can be baptized on behalf of someone who has already passed away. The idea is that if I am baptized on behalf of someone who has already died, then the benefits of that baptism (remission of sins) is transferred to them. Does this passage teach that I can be baptized on behalf of someone who has died?

This is a doctrine that contradicts the teachings of scripture in reference to accountability. In Ezekiel 18.20, we are told that *“The soul who sins shall die.”* If someone who has died can receive the benefits of your obedience, then it would equally be true that one who has died can receive the consequence of your disobedience. Yet this passage says that each one will be held accountable for his own actions. It goes on to say that *“the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”* Neither righteousness or wickedness is transferrable.

This same principle is taught in 2 Corinthians 5.10. In reference to the judgment, we are told that *“each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”* Judgment will be according to what each individual has done.

So what does this passage actually mean? Since this passage is vague at best, it has been interpreted in a number of different ways. Whatever the interpretation, it must be consistent with other clear teachings. The most common interpretation is that Paul was using an argument style called, “ad hominem.” The idea is to use a practice of the opposition to make a point. “Why are you baptizing on behalf of the dead if you yourselves don’t believe in the resurrection?” He was showing that their argument was inconsistent with their practice (although he did not endorse their practice).

Whatever the meaning, one thing is clear. Remission of sins is given only to those who are baptized.