

DOING A NEW THING

DEUTERONOMY 1:6-8; ACTS 5:17-21; 2
CORINTHIANS 5:17; COLOSSIANS 3:1-14
2025-01-05

I hope you've had a Christ-filled Christmas and that your New Year is off to a good start! New Year's resolutions? Any that you've managed to keep so far—deep into the fifth day of the New Year? I remember a time when advertisers used to say about or print on their product that it was “new and improved” so you wouldn't think it was the same old product. **Is your New Year going to be “new and improved”?** A few years back Subaru advertised their Outback as “the GOAT”—the greatest of all time. Let's talk about how that can happen with your new year.

Every new year brings new opportunities and challenges. May the Lord **prepare us to receive something new this year** to improve our lives as He prepared the Israelites in Deuteronomy. **To receive from God**, we must believe He's prepared something for us and simultaneously, we need to dismiss thoughts of not being worthy or deserving of God's blessings. **To receive from God**, we must believe He'll do what He says. We cannot lean into our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5, 6) **or dwell too much** on the past because we might miss seeing God's hand at work. When God nudges us forward, we can't allow fear to keep us in our comfort zone or be satisfied with our current situation and talk ourselves out of what God wants to do. **Remember our history with God and be ready to receive.** God **wants us to step out and receive** the blessings He has in store for us.

So, is your new year going to be new & improved? **First, it can happen only with God's leading** and you aligning with that leading. **While God never changes, He's always doing a new thing.** He gives you new circumstances and opportunities every day. Sometimes we're resistant to any kind of change at all. That makes us stagnant. It makes our life story all about our yesterdays rather than looking forward to the tomorrows that God wants us to thrive in.

We live in a new world, very different from what it was even a year ago, let alone ten or twenty. Yet, **God's Word remains eternal and perfect. It's how we apply it that changes over time.** **Jesus was always the centerpiece of God's A plan**, even before Adam and Eve disobeyed God and led us all into our sinful nature, even before God destroyed the people of Noah's generation except for his family. **Jesus was always the One who would restore us, redeem us, save us.** We're going to have Communion this morning—a right thing to do in our first worship service of the year. You're going to hear me repeat Jesus' words when I lift the cup: **“This is the new covenant in My blood**, shed for the remission of sins, for the forgiveness of sins.” **This is Jesus' promise to us of new life for us because of Him** and through Him.

How did God do this? Isaiah begins chapter 42:1-9 with the subtitle: “The Servant of the Lord”. It's about Jesus, 700+ years before Jesus was Christmas born:

*“Here's My servant, whom I uphold, My Chosen One in whom I delight; I will put My Spirit on Him and He will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and a smouldering wick He will not snuff out. In faithfulness He will bring forth justice; He will not falter or be discouraged till He establishes justice on earth...I the Lord, have called You to righteousness; I will take hold of Your hand. I will keep You and **will make You to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles**, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release*

from the dungeon those who sit in darkness...See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

God is doing this new thing through Jesus, who in Himself is the New Covenant, light to the world, opening our eyes so that we can indeed see 20/20 to change the things that are wrong in the world. Paul tells us to be imitators of God. So, we are to bring justice to the world, one person at a time; we are to be gentle like Him but strong in our commitment to do right. We are to be light in the darkness.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 gives us another glimpse of how God is doing a new thing:

"The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to led them out of Egypt...This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel...I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be My people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour or brother, saying, 'Know the Lord', because they will all know Me...for I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

God's mercies are new every morning. He has forgiven our sins through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for us. **When we confess our sins to Him, He forgives our wickedness and remembers our sins no more. So, every day is a clean slate for us. Every day is a new start—a day of new life in Christ Jesus!** **According to Ezekiel 11:19 God will give us an undivided heart and put a new spirit in us**—nothing less than the Holy Spirit. He has accomplished this through Jesus. So, if we are given an undivided heart and the Holy Spirit dwells in us, **do you not think God has done and continues to do a new thing in us daily?**

And of course, Jesus gave us a new commandment: that we love one another. Are you living that new way? When the apostles were put in jail because the High Priest and his associates were jealous of the healings the apostles were doing, **God freed them from prison and told them to tell the people the full message of this new life.** And that is what they did. **You too have been raised to new life in Christ. If you're in Christ, you're a new creation; the old is gone, the new has (already) come! Live it!**

Paul tells us more about how to live this new life. Put to death all your earthly junk: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires & greed. Ditch anger, rage, malice, slander & bad language and don't lie. **Paul says it's like taking off one set of clothing & putting on a brand new set**—a new self that's constantly being renewed in knowledge and in the image of God. Christ is for everyone and equally!

OK, you ditch these things. What do you replace them with? It's an awesome list: **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.** Repeat them with me & lock them into your memory and your heart. How are you doing with each of those? Invite Jesus to build you up in each of them. **Then, bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.** But Doug, you don't know what...whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **And over all these virtues put on love which brings them all together.** Got it?

Go, live it in the world—today, tomorrow, this week, this month and all year! Let's go to the table and give God the thanks He deserves for His unbelievable gift of love and grace that come to us new each day through Jesus Christ!