

# So It's a New Year

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## Key Scripture

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (ESV, 2 Corinthians 5:17)

## Sermon in One Sentence

As believers in Christ, the New Year is not merely a fresh start on the calendar, but a divine invitation to live out the radical new creation we already are by God's grace.

## Introduction

The crisp turning of a calendar page, the collective countdown to midnight, the ubiquitous resolutions — there's something inherently captivating about a new year. It's a moment imbued with hope, a cultural reset button that tempts us to believe that this time, things will be different. Yet, for many, the initial optimism quickly devolves into the familiar pattern of old habits, broken promises, and the quiet despair that perhaps change is truly impossible. We chase newness on the outside – new diets, new routines, new goals – but often neglect the profound yearning for newness within.

This widespread sentiment isn't just a modern phenomenon; it speaks to a deep human longing for redemption, for a do-over, for a clean slate that transcends mere temporal markers. We intuitively understand that merely changing the date doesn't change the heart. The real problem isn't the calendar; it's the condition of our own souls, which crave transformation beyond what any secular resolution can offer.

Tonight, as we stand on the precipice of another 365 days, my aim is not to offer you a list of things to *do* to be new, but to remind you of the glorious truth of what God has already *done* for you. Our chosen scripture from 2 Corinthians 5:17 promises a newness that is foundational, radical, and truly transformative. It's a newness that doesn't just begin on January 1st, but began the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ, and it continues to unfold by His power every single day.

## Historical & Biblical Context

The Apostle Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was written amidst significant turmoil and opposition. The Corinthian church, a community he had founded, was rife with divisions, moral decay, theological misunderstanding, and challenges to Paul's apostolic authority. In this challenging context, Paul passionately defends his ministry and the integrity of the Gospel. He is not primarily concerned with the calendar year, but with the profound, spiritual reality of the Christian's identity in Christ. This particular passage, found in 2 Corinthians 5, sits within a larger discourse on reconciliation and the new covenant. Paul is urging believers to live consistently with the new identity that God has graciously given them through Christ's atoning work. He is calling them to embrace the reality of their transformed status, reminding them

that their past, their old way of life, is superseded by the radical new life found in Jesus. This message, therefore, is not merely a feel-good platitude; it's a foundational truth for navigating life's challenges and pursuing holiness, all rooted in God's redemptive act on the cross.

## **Main Point I — The Divine Declaration of a New Creation**

**Scripture:** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17a)

The New Year for the believer begins not with a human decision, but with a divine declaration. This verse doesn't offer a suggestion or a challenge; it states an undeniable reality. "If anyone is in Christ" is not a minor qualifier but the essential condition. To be "in Christ" means to have placed your faith in Jesus, to have been united with Him through His death and resurrection, and to have received His Holy Spirit. When this union occurs, something cataclysmic and beautiful happens: you *are* a "new creation." This is not an improved version of the old you; it is a fundamentally different, divinely wrought being. The Greek word for "creation" (ktisis) is the same word used for God's original act of creating the cosmos. Just as God spoke and the universe sprang into being, so too does He speak over the believer, and a brand new spiritual reality emerges.

This means your identity is now defined by Christ, not by your past failures, your present struggles, or your future anxieties. You are not a renovation project; you are a fresh act of God's creative power. In Christ, the very fabric of your being has been re-stitched by the Holy Spirit. Your spiritual DNA has been overwritten. This new identity is not something you strive to earn or achieve; it is a gift received, a truth to be embraced, and a reality from which you are called to live. As we step into a new year, let this foundational truth anchor your soul: your core identity, if you are in Christ, is "new creation," sealed and secured by God himself.

## **Main Point II — The Radical Rupture from the Old**

**Scripture:** The old has passed away; (2 Corinthians 5:17b)

The radical nature of being a new creation is further emphasized by what Paul says *about* the old. It doesn't just fade, or get forgotten, or slowly dissolve; it "has passed away." This is a definitive, past-tense declaration. It's an accomplished fact. The "old" refers to everything that characterized our life apart from Christ: our condemnation under the law, our sinful nature's dominion, our slavery to sin, our self-centered existence, and our futile attempts to find righteousness on our own terms. All of that, in the sight of God, has been decisively dealt with through Christ's work on the cross. It has expired, it has been abolished, it has been made obsolete.

This doesn't mean we no longer struggle with sin or experience the effects of a fallen world. But it means the **reigning power** of sin over us has been broken. We are no longer enslaved to our old nature. The old master, sin, has been dethroned, and Christ now rules. This truth liberates us from the destructive grip of regret, guilt, and shame that so often accompanies the start of a new year. You don't have to drag the failures and brokenness of last year into this year, because for the believer, the old has genuinely passed away. God doesn't just forgive; He obliterates the condemning record and creates a new beginning.

## **Main Point III — The Glorious Reality of the New**

**Scripture:** behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17c)

Following the declaration that the old has passed away, Paul exclaims, "behold, the new has come." This isn't a passive arrival; it's an active, present reality, something to be marveled at. The word "behold" invites us to stop, pay attention, and grasp the stunning truth. What "new" has come? It's the new life in Christ – a life characterized by spiritual freedom, a transformed mind, a renewed purpose, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It's a new relationship with God as our Father, a new identity as His beloved child, and a new trajectory for our lives, now centered on His glory.

This newness is not merely a future hope; it is a present possession. It is the beginning of eternal life, lived out here and now. The new year, for a believer, is not primarily about starting fresh with a blank slate, but about living more fully into the new reality that God has already inaugurated within us. Our task is to consciously, consistently, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, walk in accordance with this new identity. We are called to "put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). This journey of sanctification, of becoming more like Christ, is the beautiful unfolding of the newness that has already come.

## Illustration

Consider the story of a man deeply in debt, his credit score ruined, his possessions seized, with no hope of recovery. Every new month brought only more bills, more shame, more despair. Then, a benefactor, incredibly wealthy and benevolent, steps in, pays off every single debt, clears his record, and opens a new, fully funded bank account in his name. Not only that, but the benefactor adopts him into his family, giving him a new name, a new inheritance, and a completely new future. The man wakes up on January 1st. He could still live as if he were bankrupt, hiding from creditors, making meager attempts to repay debts that are no longer his. But if he truly grasped the reality of what had been done for him, he would begin to live according to his new reality: a son of wealth, debt-free, with boundless resources, free to invest in noble causes and live a life of purpose. That is a faint echo of what God has done for us in Christ. The old debt is gone, the old identity is purged, and a glorious new life has already come.

## Practical Application

- 1. Embrace Your New Identity:** This week, take time to meditate on 2 Corinthians 5:17. Write it down, memorize it. Consciously reject the labels and lies that would drag you back to your "old self." Declare aloud, "I am a new creation in Christ!"
- 2. Repent and Renew:** As you identify old habits or mindsets from the past year that do not align with your new creation identity, confess them to God. Then, with the Spirit's help, actively choose new, Christ-centered responses and behaviors. Start fresh by walking in daily repentance and reliance on God's grace.
- 3. Invest in Spiritual Disciplines:** Prioritize daily time in God's Word and prayer. Just as a new creation needs nourishment, your spirit needs divine food. Let the Spirit transform your mind and heart as you commune with Him.

**4. Practice Forgiveness:** Just as God has given you a new beginning, extend that grace to others. Forgive those who have wronged you in the past, and release yourself from the burden of unforgiveness, which is an "old self" characteristic.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How has the world's approach to "new beginnings" at the New Year differed from the biblical concept of "new creation" presented in 2 Corinthians 5:17?
2. What does it practically mean for you that the "old has passed away" in your life? How have you experienced the breaking of sin's power?
3. In what specific areas of your life do you need to "behold" and actively live into the reality that "the new has come"?
4. What is one concrete step you can take this week to align your daily life more closely with your identity as a new creation in Christ?

### **Closing Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the incredible gift of new life in Christ. Thank You that through Him, the old has passed away, and behold, the new has come. Help us to fully grasp this profound truth and to walk daily in the reality of our transformed identity. Empower us by Your Holy Spirit to live as new creations, bringing glory to Your name this year and always. Amen.

### **Benediction**

Go now, knowing that in Christ, you are a new creation, empowered by His Spirit to live a glorious new life, and may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.