

Fresh Start

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Out With the Old

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The website Bible Gateway puts a verse of the day on its homepage. The featured verse on New Year's Day was 2 Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

In fact, various devotional books and emails also referenced the verse. Little surprise; many people will be looking to improve themselves by changing and throwing out the old for the new. That could be a new diet, new exercise regimen or new job. It might also mean throwing out the old; leaving a dead-end job or unhealthy relationship. But we should be careful not to confuse that type of outside change with the inside-out change Paul is referring to in the verse.

When we accept Christ, we are entirely new people from the inside-out. The Holy Spirit gives us new life. We are not the same person anymore. This is not superficial change, we are transformed:

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Colossians 2:6-7.

It's not a new way of life; it is *a new life, a new you*. What you think about, what you don't think about, how you treat people, how you feel about people; it's entirely changed. So, does that make it an ill fit for the start of a new year? Not at all! Yes, we become new creations when we are saved. But Christ continues transforming us forever. The new year is a perfectly good time to remember that and take assessment of who you are versus who you were.

I'm a very different person than I was the day I was saved in 2016. And I can point to specific, amazing changes God made in me in 2018. But if God is indeed making a masterpiece of me, sometimes I feel he has put very little paint on the canvas.

So, if you bumped in 2 Corinthians 5:17 on New Year's Day, here are some questions you may want to ask yourself:

What outside changes do I still have to make as the result of the inside change that occurred when I received the Holy Spirit at my salvation? What is God asking me to add or subtract as He continues to transform me? Some examples:

1. Do I want to lose weight or is God calling me to be healthier to continue His work in me?
2. Do I want to be more organized or is God calling me to be more organized to continue His work in me?
3. Do I want to get rid of a thought pattern left over from the old me, or is God asking me to remove that barrier between Him and me?

It's a new year, but God is constantly transforming the new you. Here's one He has called me to in 2019. He's asking me to stop trying so hard to plan on ways to help people and allow the Holy Spirit to guide me to more spontaneous acts of kindness. You can't plan spontaneous; you must trust God will open your eyes

to the opportunity. Don't get me wrong; planned acts of kindness are great and they please God. But for Christ-followers, spontaneously helping others is who we are. And I have the desire in me to have them be more of who I am; I now need to pray and trust, which I plan to do in 2019.

What outside change is God calling you to make that will better align with the inside change you experienced when you accepted Christ? Here's a test I use – if I make this change, how will it bless people besides me? The more people you count, the more confident you can be that it's the kind of change Paul was referring to. And that's always a great way to start a new year!