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A New Year for Living as a New Creation

By Debbie Rony

Every year millions of people make New Year resolutions hoping to improve their lives in some way. It seems as though most people have a desire to be “better”. As Christians, we must recognize that our “better” is the way of Christ. We strive to be more like Christ in our thoughts, words, deeds, and actions. This is what the New Testament refers to as the “new creation”. We are, in fact, created to be “little Christs”, reflecting Him everywhere we go. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “*So whoever is in Christ is a new creation; behold, new things have come.*” We become this new creation by allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us by a process we call “sanctification”. But how do we cooperate with this process? What are obstacles to becoming this new creation Jesus died to make us?

An important thing to remember is that we must first deal with our “old self” or “old man” which is the rebellious, self-willed, and unsanctified parts of ourselves which includes our mind, body, will, and emotions. We must offer all of these to the process of sanctification. The New Testament often refers to these parts of ourselves as our “flesh”, which is our fallen, sinful nature. The bible is clear that our flesh is constantly in conflict with the Spirit and it keeps us from the things God wants for us. Galatians 5:15 says, “*I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want.*” We are in a **constant battle** within ourselves because we have these two natures within us fighting for control of our lives. One is in direct opposition to the will of God and the other flows from the power of the Holy Spirit in the perfect will of the Father. What then, is the solution to our problem? In order to live the way God wants us to we must

crucify the flesh; that is, the only way to overcome our flesh is to execute it! Romans 6:11-14 says, “*Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, sin must not reign over your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires. And do not present the parts of your bodies to sin as weapons for wickedness, but present yourselves to God as raised from the dead to life and the parts of you bodies to God as weapons for righteousness.*” If our old self is crucified (and kept dead!) then our new nature, the new creation within us, will take over. “*Now those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.*” (Galatians 5:24-25). More often than not this is easier said than done! Don’t get discouraged if your old self gets resurrected from time to time. God is not in a hurry and the process of sanctification takes time, patience on our part, and we must cooperate with grace. We cannot change ourselves on our own! We are the workmanship of God Himself and He can do much more with us than we can do on our own! Pray for change in earnest and allow the Holy Spirit to transform you in His own way and His own timing.

There are two ways that may help you discover those areas in your life that God may wish to transform you. One way is to fast on a regular basis. Seeking God’s Face while fasting is a sign of repentance for giving in to your old nature while seeking the new way He has for you. The other thing you should do is to read, meditate on, and study scripture. **The bible is a mirror for your soul.** It tells you what God expects, what Jesus teaches, and what the truth is. You need to know the truth about who Jesus is, who God says you are in Jesus, and how to become more like Him. Jesus is VERY clear about this. In John 8:21-32 it says, “*Jesus then said to those Jews who believed in him, “If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”*” Jesus knew that the goal of every Jewish disciple was to become like his teacher. The key word in this verse is “IF”. If you remain in the word you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. **It will set you free from your old nature.** St. Jerome said, “Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ.” Remain in Christ by remaining in the Word and you will learn everything you need to know to cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s work in you!

A New Creation continued...

There are several things the bible says we must do if we wish to cooperate with grace and become this new creation. Some things we must take off and other things we must put on. *“But now, you must put them all away; anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene language out of your mouths. Stop lying to one another since you have taken off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self which is being renewed for knowledge in the image of its creator.”* (Colossians 3:8-11) Putting off and putting on is an act of the will performed in the many decisions we make every day. We choose what to say, how to act, and what to do. However, much of what we do may be like the rest of the world but as Christians, we are supposed to be **DIFFERENT** ! We have died to the world and its ways through our baptism into Christ. I have heard it said that its ok for the Church (Body of Christ) to be in the world but not the world to be in the Church. The world is the “former way of life” referred to in Ephesians 4:22. It says, *“That you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in Gods way in righteousness and holiness of truth.”* Verses 29-32 says, *“No foul language should come out of your mouth, but only such as is good for needed edification, that it may impart grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.”* Much of what needs sanctifying are our mouths, hearts, minds, and attitudes! How are you any different from the world in any of these areas other than **the fact that you go to church?** Joyce Meyer has said, “Going to church and sitting in a pew doesn't make you a Christian any more than going home and sitting in a garage makes you a car.”

After we have habitually and consistently put off our old sinful nature we are then able to put on the ways of Jesus .We must first believe that living like Jesus is the ONLY way to live this life.

You must understand you are not your own once you chose to follow Christ. You are consecrated unto Him which means you are set apart from the world for His good purposes. 1 Peter 2:9 says, *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him whol called you out of darkness into his wonderful*

light. “ We conform our life to Jesus and not to the world to live a life of holiness for all the world to see and **you may be the only bible someone ever reads.**

How then, do we live out this Christian life as a new creation? Jesus Himself says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life.”* Since Galatians 3:27 says, *“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ”,* we are to “put on” Jesus every day. Scripture tells us the qualities we are to put on and cultivate in our lives based on the teachings of Jesus. Colossians 3:12-14 says, *“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another, as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over these put on love, that is the bond of perfection. “*

Examine yourselves and see how much of your old man is still there inside you and put him to death little by little. Do any of the words describing the “old self” still dwell in you? If so, make a New Year resolution with God to clear out the old stuff in order to make way for the new creation (Jesus inside you) to break forth and shine like a light in our dark world.

God wants each of us to renewed, sanctified, and transformed because we are all made to be reproductions of Jesus on this earth so that when people see us, the new creation, they see HIM so they may desire to know HIM. I’ve heard it described like this: We are all born to express Jesus Christ in a different way. We are not meant to reproduce other Christians...we are meant to reproduce **Christ** in a specific way . Stop comparing yourself to others and instead compare yourself only to Christ! We are called to unity, not uniformity. You have unique gifts and talents that reflect Christ’s character and goodness. Christ is like the most beautifully cut diamond with hundreds of different facets and we each reflect facets of Him. So this New Year, make a resolution to become more of the new diamond like creation you were made to be!

Create a Clean Heart in Me

By Donna Schroyer

Recently at a prayer meeting the Lord asked us to give our hearts to Him. We gave the Lord our hearts and promised to clean out any dust and debris the best we could to prepare our hearts for our Lord and Savior. The Lord said to us, "I want you to continue to prepare your hearts for me, to clean them out with sacrifice, acts of love and confession, to make them a worthy place for me to abide. I want you to be aware of my presence. I want you to treat the act of continually cleaning out our hearts as a devotion so that you will always be ready for my coming. In turn, this devotion will bring you closer to me. In return, you will yearn to be with me and know and love me more and more. I will fill you with peace. The warmth of your love will greet me and give me warmth as I enter into the light and love of your heart."

When hearing these prophetic words that night, I felt them consume my heart and knew that the Lord wanted us to take these words seriously. I took these words and pondered them in my heart. I took a deep look at my life, the condition of my heart, my day to day walk with the Lord, my journey with God, my imperfections. I try to spend time with the Lord and we work on my heart together. Bit by bit, we chisel away. Perfecting. When I think I've got this, there is always one more thing that comes up. The Lord has given me a few Scriptures to also ponder that has been helpful:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. "

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or

heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. " Philippians 4:8–9:

"But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be" Luke 1:29.

"And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" Luke 2:19.

"He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and His mother kept all these things in her heart" Luke 2:51

Dearest Jesus,, I come before you right now with all of my flaws my failings, my sin and I bring them to the foot of your cross for you to do with them as you please and I ask you to come into my heart and wipe away all that is of hindrance to you. Take away all the cobwebs and dust of this stressful season. I give you all my imperfections, my flaws, my sinfulness. I pray that your blood will permeate my body and wash me clean to prepare my heart for my King. I want to be perfect in only your eyes Lord. Not perfect as the world sees perfection, but as you see. Fill my heart with your love and your grace so as to make it your perfect home. So that when you come into my heart, I will feel that at the very least I have prepared the best I can for my -Savior to enter. I love you and I trust you Lord to be with me every step of this journey. You are always here with me - loving, protecting and reaching out your hand, filling your child with love and peace and joy. Today, I give you my heart with all its imperfections, it's bumps and bruises. You are my King of Glory. You bring wholeness and healing. You are gentle and loving and treat me with tenderness and love. I place my life in your hands Lord and will walk this journey till my last breath. I will love you and follow you. Continue to teach me your ways and help me to grow and learn from all the experiences this life brings and those you bring into my life. All are gifts from you. In return, I will share my heart, my love and journey with those you place in my path. In Jesus name.....Amen

Upcoming Events...

January 25th and 26th

Leadership Retreat

Board Members and Charismatic Prayer Group Leaders

Trinity Retreat Center, Salter Path NC

February 17th-18th

Parish Mission Guest Speaker Fr. Dave Pivonka

7pm St. Michael the Archangel Church, Cary NC

April 6th

Save the Date! Ignited by Truth Conference

NC State Reynolds Coliseum

Guest Speakers include Fr. Larry Richards and Peter Kreeft

<https://ignitedbytruth.org/>

For more information about these events and registration please visit our website at

www.ccsraleigh.weebly.com