

New Year - New Start

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV)

I recently heard on the radio that the most common New Year's resolution is the resolution to lose weight. I suppose that's not surprising. Christmas and New Year do tend to be a time of somewhat excessive eating after all! It's a small sign that we all want to be something different, something better, than we actually are.

So, what if you could have an entirely "new you" this year? That's what Paul is describing in 2 Corinthians 5:17 and he uses the language of "new creation." When someone has become a follower of Jesus they are united to Christ, or "in Christ." This has consequences that point both backwards and forwards in time. When we think of creation, we instinctively think of the perfection of Adam and Eve living in the idyllic garden of Eden. When we think of new creation we are being encouraged to look forward to the time when there will be a perfect "new heaven and new earth" (Revelation 21:1).

Now we're not in either of those times, not yet at least. However, Paul is telling us something profound about what happens when we trust in Jesus. The new creation starts in us now! In fact if you read the verses before this in 2 Corinthians 5:14-16 you can find example of that, as Paul finds that now love replaces hate, service replaces selfishness and truth about Jesus replaces error (to summarise the words of writer Paul Barnett). "The old is gone and the new is here!"

Now, I know this isn't the promise of a new body, which we might want for 2017. Nor is this the promise of perfection or a trouble-free life now (this is all coming later - see verses 1-10). But I wonder if you can see that it is a promise of a deep and significant change. Following Jesus transforms who you are at your core. To have love, service and truth at your core rather than hate, selfishness and error is a wonderful thing is it not?

If you are a Christian then you can rejoice in those things this year, whatever the state of your body and you can remember that those things, unlike your current body, will last into eternity. However, perhaps it is good at the start of a new year for both those of us who consider ourselves followers of Christ and those who do not, to hear Paul words at the end of the chapter:

We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:20b-21 NIV)

Perhaps we can examine ourselves this January.

Have we been reconciled to God on the basis of Christ's sin-bearing death?
Has love replaced hate, service replaced selfishness and truth about Christ error?
Who are we praying for and seeking to speak to about this glorious message of new creation so we too can be "Christ's ambassadors" (v.20)?