TITLE: A Time for New Beginnings!

TEXT: Ro 8:1-2; Gal. 2:20; 2nd Co. 17-20

INTRODUCTION: We are quickly approaching the New Year. Do you realize that 2015 is just 4 days away.

Anticipating the New Year can be an exciting time....Or it can be a depressing time...

It all depends on your perspective...

How we feel about the New Year will largely depend upon just what we feel the New Year represents...

If we look at it from just a time perspective it will most likely be depressing to us, especially those of us who are starting to see a little gray where there has never been any before....(And others of us are just thankful for the hair we have regardless of the color).

But that is looking at it from a pretty negative perspective...

Actually the term, New Year, is not at all negative, but positive in what it suggests..

In most every area of life the word new has a good feel to it---New baby--new car---new house--new job--

We often use the word "new" to expresses our excitement, our anticipation of something..

The New Year can be an exciting prospect, something to be anxiously anticipated....Especially if you are a Christian and have had a life changing experience in Christ.

If for no other reason than with each New Year comes a reminder of what Jesus Christ did for you... He made it possible for you to become a new creation…

**2Cor 5:17 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

The Greek word we translate as "new" here is:

**2537 kainos {kahee-nos'}**

**1) new**

**1a1) recently made, fresh, recent, unused, unworn**

**1b) as respects substance**

**1b1) of a new kind, unprecedented, novel, uncommon, unheard of**

This is the exciting prospect of the new birth, the "born again experience. Being made new in Christ!

**ka-hee-nos--** fresh, recent, unused, unworn, unprecedented, novel!!

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation!

This promise for being In Christ is not just the hope of being renewed or made over but we have the hope of becoming new creations! As something recently made! Something that is unused and unworn! Something fresh! Something unprecedented! Something novel!

The New Year is known as a time of freshness, a time for new beginnings, a time for starting over, but if we haven't first had a new beginning, a starting over with God by becoming new in Christ Jesus, than no matter what resolution we may make on New Year’s Day or any other day of the year, we will still be left feeling used and worn and like there is something still severely lacking in our life.

And for good reason, because there is something lacking…

For without Christ we are still sinners in dire need of a savior.

We are still slaves that are enslaved to sin and need to be delivered.

We are still a lost soul trapped in a body of death that needs redeemed.

But if we are in Christ than we have become a new creation.

**If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!**

What is the old that has gone and what is the new that has come?

Once we place ourselves In Christ the old that has gone is our nature to sin.

The new that has come is the very presence of Christ in our life.

Some may say, well I have accepted Christ but I still battle my sin nature, it still is within me, I still struggle with sin.....

While it is true that we will always have a sin nature as long as we are in this body of flesh, we don't have to allow it to rule or give in to any of its evil desires

Need to make a point here.......

Initial salvation is not what is being talked about here in this verse of Scripture when it says **"If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation."**

Salvation, accepting Christ, places Christ in us but it does not automatically place us in Christ!

(Parallel scripture)

**Roma 8:1 (NIV) Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,**

Here we have the same term "in Christ" used!

**Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!**

Now if salvation is what places us "in Christ", how come there are so many Christians running around feeling condemnation?

What is it that brings the feeling of condemnation into our life?

Sin! Disobeying God! Doing things that we know that we shouldn't do!

How is it possible for someone to be saved, forgiven of sin and still feel condemnation if they sin?

Paul says that there is **therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!**

Because being saved and being in Christ are two separate things..

Salvation, being saved, places Christ in us and it makes it possible for us to place ourselves in Christ.

If we have accepted Christ into our life but we have not become a new creation, if we are still basically the same as we were before, then we are not in Christ..

If we have accepted Christ into our life but we still feel condemnation then we are not in Christ…

Scripture doesn't lie!

**If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation!**

**If anyone is in Christ, there is now no condemnation!**

So if we are not new creations or we still feel condemned we are not in Christ!

(Let’s take it a little further)

**Romans 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.**

Our sinful nature is the law of sin and death that is within us.

The indwelling presence of Christ in our life is the law of the Spirit of life that has come to set us free from the law of sin and death...

The Holy Spirit has come into our life to set us free from our sinful nature, to enable us to be victorious over it!

It is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives that gives us the ability to stop obeying the desires of our sinful nature and gives us the power to take control of our lives and obey God.

So how can someone have accepted Christ and still not be living Christ like lives?

Because even though we may have accepted Christ and invited Him into our heart, it is still our choice whether to obey His guiding...or not!

The Holy Spirit is a gentleman. He will never force us to do anything.

Scripture says, **CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY!**

Christ in us gives us the hope of glory! Without Christ in us we do not have that hope.

In order for that glory to be attained in us, we have to first place ourselves "in Christ"…

**en kris-tos**

**In Greek en =prep stating fixed position!**

To take a fixed position is a military term.

Example: hold a hill or die trying to --no retreat-- stay there no matter what!

It will take total and complete, no holes bared, commitment to hold that hill!

Taking a fixed position in Christ is to "determine" to give Him control of our life, and then standing fixed in that position, not wavering in that determination.

The best scriptural example of what it means to be in Christ that I can think of is;

**Gala 2:20 (NIV) I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

To truly be "in Christ" we have to come to this same level of commitment.

**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me**.(or lives through me)

Being "in Christ" is dying to self and allowing Christ to rule and live His life through us!

It means coming to the place of saying " Lord, never the less, not my will but your will be done in my life!

Being and remaining in Christ is simply to always yield our will to the will of the Holy Spirit within us.

When we do that we are putting to death our sinful nature, we are crucifying ourselves with Christ and we are being transformed into the new creations that God has called us to be.

It will only be as we do this that we will be able to live lives that are actually free from condemnation by becoming Holy just as he is Holy..

That is what it really means to be sanctified--to be Holy as he is Holy! And this can only happen in our life as we give total and complete control of our life to Christ.

Church, all too often we try to separate salvation from sanctification.. And it doesn't work!

If we experience salvation but don't go on to sanctification we are going to end up miserable!

If we try to experience sanctification apart from salvation we will end up miserable! Because it will never happen, no matter how much effort we put into it.

The two are meant to go together--we need salvation for sanctification to ever take place in our life-- and without sanctification there is a big black hole of un-satisfaction in our salvation.

God never intended for our placing ourselves "in Christ" to be an option for the believer.

Why is it essential for us to live our lives "in Christ"?

Back to **2nd Co. 5...18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:**

**19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**

**20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.**

It is essential for us to live our lives "in Christ" because we have been given the ministry of reconciliation through Christ.

This is how it works... As we place ourselves "in Christ", as we give Christ total and complete control of our lives, then we become Christ, we become messiah to our world!

(Sounds like a pretty bold statement to make but its true)

Is it us? No! It is Jesus living His life through us.

This is what Jesus meant when He said that after the Holy Spirit would come that we would do even greater things then He did while He was here.

How could that be? For the Church to do greater things then Jesus did during His earthly ministry?

Jesus, in His earthly body was limited to time and space just as we are...He could only be in one place at one time....

With Pentecost, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, Jesus multiplied the ministry of Himself.

As we are filled with the Spirit of Christ and then give His Spirit control of our lives, as we place ourselves "in Christ “ after He has placed Himself "in us", we become extensions of Jesus in our world!

If we have given control of our life to Jesus and are "in Him", then wherever we go, He is there…

This is the dynamics we see in the first century Church.

After Pentecost think about what happened?

The church exploded! Many more people came to believe after Pentecost than before?

Why?

Because Christ was being multiplied in the world.

As Spirit filled believers went over here Jesus was with them....As other went over there Jesus was with them...

As more and more people were being saved and filled with the Spirit of Christ and allowing Christ to live through them, Christ was being multiplied in our world.

As wherever they went Jesus went with them…

With Pentecost God gave us the ministry of Jesus, the ministry of reconciliation! The ministry of reconciling fallen man with his creator!

To me, this is one of the most exciting verses in Scripture...**20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.**

Does it excite you to realize that you have been called to be an ambassador of Christ?

That God has chosen you, he has entrusted you to represent Him!

Church, God has chosen to use us to reconcile the world to Himself! He has chosen to use us to reach the lost with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and He has no alternate or back up plans for doing it!

If we don't do it--it won't happen!

Do you feel the responsibility of being an ambassador of Christ?

An ambassador doesn't represent himself; he represents the one who sent him.

Who is it that we are representing to our world today---ourselves, or the one who has sent us?

The only way that we can truly be representing Jesus in our world is if we are, and remain, "in Him"!

The last verse sums up what being in Christ is all about!

**21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

Are you, am I, living our lives "in Christ"?

Are we yielding, have we yielded our wills to His?

Are we becoming the righteousness of God through Christ?

Can we really call ourselves Christian if we are not?

As I said at the beginning, we are approaching a new year! A time for new beginnings, a time for starting over, a time for fresh starts..

Do you need a new or a renewed beginning, a fresh start with God this morning?

If you do than make this New Year a point of commitment or renewed commitment and determine to be the man or woman of God that he has called and enabled you to be through Christ Jesus your Lord....

What a privilege! What a high calling to be chosen by God to be an ambassador of Christ Jesus, representing Him in our world.

Prayer....

Make this day a point of renewed commitment to the Lord...

Come to alter to make that commitment....