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Happy New You!

By Tal Davis

It is December 31st, just before twelve midnight (Eastern Standard Time) in Times Square in New York City. Thousands of excited people wait for the Big Ball to begin falling. The countdown begins: 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 – Happy New Year! What a celebration! But a celebration of what? A tick on the clock that signals the passing from one day to the next, or from one year to another?

In 1982, the "Artist Formally Known as Prince" (I'm not sure what he called himself when he died in 2016) recorded a song called *Let's Party Like Its 1999*. Actually he was not celebrating anything then, but at the end of the real 1999 everybody was celebrating the beginning of a new century (although the 21st century did not actually begin until Jan. 1, 2001).

This year will be like the others as we move into another new year. People will be in Times Square and many other places drinking and dancing as the clock strikes twelve. Many of them won't remember what happened but will be suffering painful hangovers.

In any case, the New Testament talks about something really worth celebrating: Not just a new year but a *New You!* Perhaps in this coming season you will discover how to change, not just your calendar, but your whole life! The Apostle Paul tells how in his second letter to the Corinthians.

17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18 Now all these

things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21 NASB)

In his text Paul reveals to us what it means to have a new life in Christ. He tells the secret of how to become a *New You*. He designates three miraculous things worth celebrating that happen in the life a new believer. These can happen to you if you choose to believe in Him.

First, if you become a *New You* your sins are forgiven by God. In verse 17 of the above passage Paul presents a significant theological principle. As the New King James Version exceptionally states it: "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he* is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, *all things have become new*" (emphasis added).

In my more than fifty years as a believer I have had opportunities to meet many Christians whose lives have been radically changed by Christ. One of most interesting characters I met was in the Florida State Penitentiary. His name was Jack Murphy, but was better known as "Murf the Surf." In 1964, he and two other henchmen stole the "Star of India Diamond." A few years later he was convicted of that crime and murder and was given a life sentence. However, in

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1975, while still serving his sentence (that's when I met him) he accepted Christ after being witnessed to by Bill Glass and Roger Staubach. In 1986 Murphy was paroled and released from prison. After that, he joined with Bill Glass (the late former Pro football player turned evangelist) and became a director of Glass' Champions for Life ministry. He died in 2020 at age 83 while living in Florida.

I don't know what your life has been like. Most of us don't have lives like Jack Murphy. Maybe, like mine, your life has been fairly ordinary. Like most of us, maybe you have done some things you are not proud of, but not criminal. No matter, *we are all sinners and we all need forgiveness*. This is how we get new life. We must admit to God and to ourselves that we have fallen short of His standards. That's the first step to a New You.

Second, a New You means you will be reconciled to God. In 2 Corinthians 1:17-19, Paul used two key concepts. He starts by talking to them about being "in Christ." That's a familiar phrase to most Christians. But do we think about what it really means?

From 1969 to 1974, the United States landed twelve men on the moon (then we never went back). Think about an astronaut walking about on the moon. He must wear a specially designed pressurized suit and helmet. He is indeed "in the suit." It surrounds him and provides oxygen for him to breathe and live. That is something like what it means to be "in Christ." If we believe in Him, He is the source and sustainer of our lives. Spiritually we cannot survive without Him.

The second concept Paul uses five times in verses 18-20 is "reconcile" or "reconciliation." That's another

term we hear a lot in Christian circles. But what exactly does that mean? Let me illustrate.

My father was one of the first American soldiers to go to occupied Japan at the end of World War II. I remember he told me how the Japanese people at first were frightened of the U.S. soldiers. They had been told by their country's wartime propaganda that Americans were evil and even cannibals. As time went on, however, as the Japanese saw how humanely they were being treated, they became more open to Americans. So those who were once fierce enemies were eventually reconciled, their relationship was restored, and peace was made. Today, Japan and the United States are close allies and friends.

This what reconciliation means. We were once enemies of God. However, through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, for believers, that relationship is now restored. If you believe in Christ you will receive a new life – a *New You*.

But this also means you have a responsibility. Third then, a New You means you are to be a reconciler for God. In 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 Paul calls all the apostles, and Himself, "Ambassadors for Christ." An ambassador, of course, is an official representative of a king or country. One historic example of an American ambassador was Shirley Temple Black. Yes, that Shirley Temple, who was once the child queen of the movies. After she left acting in the 1960s, and before her death in 2014, she served as United States ambassador to both Ghana and Czechoslovakia, and also served as Chief of Protocol of the United States.

Paul's mission as an Ambassador for Christ is to represent Him in the world and to proclaim His message of reconciliation. While we are not apostles, if we have received our reconciliation

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through Christ, we also are to be ambassadors and "reconcilers" for Him in our time and place. How? By showing the love of Christ and sharing the gospel with those we meet.

The point is, God still changes lives and is making "new creations" out of sinful people, and He uses us to accomplish that goal. Next year, Freddy Davis and I will be releasing our new book, *Shattering the Truth Mirage*, that provides clear principles for sharing Christ across worldview lines. Watch for it.

Have you received your new life? Or are you still just the "same 'ole, good ole' you?" God wants to make a "New You" in Jesus Christ. All you need to do is admit you are a sinner, repent of your sins, and put your faith in Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. If you are already a believer, God has work for you to do as His representative in the world. Either way, this January you can celebrate not just a new year, which, to be honest, is trivial, but you can celebrate a new life and a New You, which is miraculous!

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