

# A New Year in Christ

By Robert Johnson

The beginning of a new year brings about change. It may not seem like it to some, but it does. In a new year, we will continue to grow older, with all the changes that can bring to our lives. In a new year, there will be new blessings to enjoy. In a new year, there will be new challenges to face. In a new year, there can be a renewal of relationships, and there can also be a cessation of relationships. Life is never static, and change is one of the key experiences we face.

How do we deal with change? To be oblivious to it can court disaster. For example, changes in how one feels physically can be signs that something needs to be addressed with one's health, and to ignore them can bring about unwanted issues with which to deal. The same can also be said spiritually. In a new year, we should be striving to grow into a deeper, a more committed and a more serving relationship with God in Christ. Do we take time to evaluate where we are spiritually, and where we want to be? Paul did. He told the Philippians, "I have not already attained, and I have not yet been made complete, but I press on, if I might lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I have not yet laid hold, but I am doing one thing: forgetting the things behind, and stretching forward to the things ahead, I press toward the goal, toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

The writer of Hebrews also reminds us how to deal with what we face through the todays of our lives, whether good or bad. "Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the originator and finisher of the faith. Because of the joy set before him, he endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and he sat down at the right side of God's throne. Consider carefully the One who endured such hatred by sinners, lest you lose heart and give up" (Hebrews 12:2-3).

We should always match whatever changes are happening to us in the here and the now with an ever-growing relationship with the Father and Son, because not to do so guarantees we will be regressing spiritually, not moving forward. We should always remember the things of today are temporal and should never rule our feelings, our priorities or our motives in living. Life spiritually in Christ, and the promise of eternal life, should always govern life in the here and the now. "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). The life we live in the flesh should be lived by faith in the Son of God (Galatians 2:20). Christ should be what life is all about (Colossians 3:4). Is He our priority for living? Is He the focus for how we will approach whatever changes happen to us this year? Is He such an integral aspect of our lives that, in Him, no change in life can dull our hope for tomorrow?

God equips us with what we need to address both the good and bad in a new year. We have the avenue of prayer, the opportunity to hear Him speak to us through His Word, the path of fellowship with Him and fellow Christians, the encouragement of worship, and the renewal of service. Will we just let life happen, or will we seek His way for life, allowing Him to mold and shape us closer to His image? No matter what happens in life, God is more than adequate to equip us to handle any change, as He works to perfect His changes in us. Will you take advantage of all the possibilities God wants to provide for you? "Therefore, we take courage. Though our outer person is wearing out, our inner person is renewed every day. Our momentary light suffering continues to work for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. We continue to look, not at things visible, but the invisible. Visible things are temporary, but the invisible are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Have a blessed new year, no matter what, in God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."

## Flee Iniquities

By D.A. Adenugba

We can learn some vital lessons reading through Amos 2:6-8. Oppression and sexual immorality are degrading; they were then, and they are now, too. Israel maltreated the poor, whereas God required that they were to be treated with respect and honour (Psalm 41:4; Proverbs 17:5; 14:31). However, it was obvious by Israel's actions that the nation had no respect for God's Word. The Israelites despised the commandments of God, for they could have treated the poor with respect and not oppressed them.

The poor were considered valueless in the ancient nation of Israel, but God viewed them as priceless. Prophet Amos wrote concerning the way the rulers and nobles maltreated the upright and the poor. "They sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals" (Amos 2:6). Israel oppressed the poor so greatly that God had no option other than to discipline it.

The nation of Israel engaged in large scale sexual immorality. Brethren, "flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body." Since we are bought with the precious blood of Christ, we should glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, rather than in immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

Are you an oppressor? Flee oppression! Love your neighbors as yourself. All must learn to respect the poor. The poor must learn to respect themselves. "A poor man who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain which leaves no food" (Proverbs 28:3). Possess your vessel in purity! Flee sexual immorality so that you will not be reduced to a crust of bread (Proverbs 6:26-35).