

It's De'ja' Vu All Over Again

Introduction: Here is the question that counts for you today: Are you closer to God today than at the beginning of this year?

A. Wouldn't it be great if the moment we became a Christian everything in our lives could be made whole and right?

1. Ah... experience tells us that instant perfection does not just happen (It's not realistic is it?)

-**Alan Redpath** has this interesting observation: "The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment, the manufacture of a saint is the task of a lifetime"

2. The reality of our life is, that even after we have become Christians, we unfortunately still find ourselves repeating some of the same sins over and over.

B. This reminds me of the great man of faith, Abraham.

1. You remember right?

- Genesis 20 Abrahams' been away from the city of Haran 25 years.

- At this point life has had one adventure after another for him

- We've seen his kindness when he gave Lot the choice land

- We've seen his courage, as he rescued Lot from his enemies

2. You also remember his failures too, right?

- When he mistook Eliezer for the promised child

- When he decided to use Hagar as a substitute wife to bear him the promised child

- When he asked Sarah to lie about being his wife

C. It's De'ja' Vu all over again... (sounds like one of us)

I. The disappointing reality of repeated sins

A. Moses (Exod. 2:11-12; Num 20:8-12)

- Moses kills the Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave

- Some 40 years later we see Moses once again losing control of his anger and striking the rock twice that God instructed only needed to be struck once in His name

- My heart breaks for Moses... as God disciplines Him

- B. The children of Israel (Ex. 15:22-24, 16:1-3; Num 14:22-23)**
- Only three days after the Red Sea encounter the Israelites begin to murmur against God for water
 - Two weeks after God provided them with sweet water they complained about their hunger
 - Even after God's repeated miracles was not enough to satisfy them
- C. Samson (Jud. 14:2-3; 16)**
- The first words of this Israelite Judge are "I saw a woman (a Philistine)... Get her for me, for she looks good to me".
 - The Philistine were enemies of God, and Samson married her only to be betrayed by her.
 - Twenty years later, his lust lured him into the same mistake, but this time with fatal results
 - Delilah's deceit brought about his downfall and his death
- D. Peter (Mark 14:27-31, 66-72)**
- Peter claimed that he would never forsake Jesus- v.29
 - Even after Jesus told Peter that he would deny him, he once again responded... even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you! v. 31
 - That very night Peter denied him 3X vv. 68, 70-71
- E. In our own day**
- Who of us has ever complained about our circumstances
 - Who of us has not had to confess to all kinds of sin?
 - Lust?
 - Loss of temper?
 - The denial of our relationship with the Lord?
 - Self-centeredness?
 - Judgmental attitudes
 - Who here can claim of never repeating a sin?
 - Not one of us can turn up our nose to Moses, the Israelites, Samson or Peter
 - Instead, we should learn from them

II. The Spiritual Significance of a New Year

- A. There is a great spiritual significance to new years.**
1. The transition from December 31 to January 1 every year reminds us of the truth that there are new beginnings to be had in this life.

2. By God's mercy, we can make a fresh start of things (We can have clean slates)

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

B. Spiritual renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit.

1. When any one of us accepts what cannot be changed about himself and his circumstances, stops blaming others for his plight, and stands ready to move ahead with his life, God will take his surrendered heart and situation in order to begin shaping him anew.

2. He will give constant reassurances that we are not alone in a hostile universe and teach us to minister out of our pains and failures.

-Paul had this process of ongoing personal revival in mind when he wrote:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12-14).

Conclusion: Here's a great New-Year suggestion for all of us:

A. Repentance! I mean this to be taken seriously.

1. Not the kind of repentance some of you have tried.

2. Not the kind of repentance that names and corrects every fault!

3. But the type that simply surrenders the control of mind, heart, and life to God — one day at a time.

-Alcoholics Anonymous understands the difference between church-house repentance and life-changing repentance. Church-house repentance is the drunk's promise that he/she will never again touch a drop of alcohol, straighten up her life, and be a good person. Life-changing repentance gives up on trying to reform one's own life, surrenders the control to God, and accepts just enough strength to live a new day every day — one day at a time.

B. If you're willing to embrace this kind of mind-changing, heart-changing, life-changing repentance, stand with me to pray for forgiveness and strength.

Our Father, save us and rescue us from the sins to which we so easily yield.

Keep us, from saying one thing with our words and another with our deeds;

From criticizing others for things we allow in ourselves;

From demanding standards for others which we ourselves make no effort to fulfill.

Keep us, from flirting with temptation and playing with fire;

From the indecision that cannot say yes or no and be done with it;

From the reluctance to break with habits we know are wrong.

Keep us, from trying to have the best of both worlds and trying to please both others and you;

From living one way on Sunday and another the other days of the week;

From anything which would keep us from giving all of our loyalty, all of our allegiance, all of our life, and all of our heart to you.

We ask these things in Jesus Christ. Amen.

C. Now the best thing you can do now is to communicate to the appropriate people what you have done.

- 1. God knows! But you may need to communicate to your spouse, your mom or dad etc...**
- 2. You may need to be baptized in order to seal and certify your relationship to Jesus.**
- 3. If you don't have a church home, you need to-- commit to being identified with and involved with a congregation of God's people**
- 4. You'll need to formalize what you've done-- go public!**

Depending on what you do, it's a new day for you — even before the official start of 2004. I believe that God will bless you as you leave this place today.

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