

It Starts Now - 2022

2 Corinthians 6:2 - NIV

² For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you."

I tell you, **now is the time of God's favor**, now is the day of salvation.

This is the time of year that people make New Year's Resolutions.

They set new goals.

- Relationship goals
- Financial goals
- Physical goals
- Spiritual goals
- They make Life Changing Decisions.

But **not everyone actually accomplishes those resolutions** however important they are.

When asking Wikipedia the online encyclopedia -

How did New Year's resolutions start?????

Wikipedia responds...

- ***"Religious origins. Babylonians made promises to their gods at the start of each year that they would return borrowed objects and pay their debts. The Romans began each year by making promises to the god Janus, for whom the month of January is named."***

I think people should return what they borrow and pay their debts. And I have to admit that I've never considered how the first month of the year got its name.

But I am interested in people wanting to change.

- In fact, I'm pretty sure that this is what *interests God the most*.
- It's why He lived and preached *in this world* for 33 years.
- It's why He disciplined 12 men *to continue His message*.
- It's why He allowed Himself to be *crucified on the cross*.
- It's why He was *resurrected on that 3rd day*.
- And it's why He offers *forgiveness of sin through repentance*.
- And it's why He promises the infilling *of His Holy Spirit* to us.

God is in the business of helping people change their lives.

God knows we are unable to live in this world relationally and spiritually the way we desire to and especially the way He would command us to.

Understand, if we are going to have real, positive, significant and lasting change in our lives (especially spiritual change)...

- It's going to take more than any of us are capable of on our own.
- It's going to take the help of God.

So how does it all get started???

- Better yet... ***When does it all get started?***
- ***This is a great question.....***

For a lot of people, the only time they seriously consider change in their life is when they make a New Year's resolution.

- But honestly, we all make small incremental changes in our lives every day.
- To some degree or another our lives are like a ship on the sea being pushed one way or another ***by situations and circumstances.***
- And ***our responses to these things*** result in the gradual changes that make up the direction our lives are going.

This kind of change is sometimes reactionary.

- It is involuntary many times.
- And it generally leads us where we really don't want our lives to go, hence ***the need for things like New Years resolutions.***

Honestly, ***it's the reason we need God's help in our lives.***

- Because ***spiritually each and every one of us*** is naturally drawn to the things in this world that destroy us spiritually and separate us from God and ***His will in our lives.***

We might need more than a New Year's Resolution if –

- We really and genuinely want to have the kind of change in our lives this year that's going to ***make a difference in our lives....***
- And cause us to live above the guilt and shame of sin....
- And ***the things that would destroy us*** physically, relationally and most importantly, spiritually.

I wonder if there could come some change in someone's life today.....

- **Not** because it's New Years,
- But because they simply have decided "***It Starts Now!***"
 - ***I'm ready - I've had enough - It's time!!!***

We do this every week.

- We'll be back here next week doing it.
- And the week after that.
- ***Offering people the chance to change their lives and make things right with God.***

It's **not** a New Years thing - It's a "***It Starts Now***" thing!!!

Peter told those people on the day of Pentecost

Acts 2:39 – ***The promise is for you and your children*** and for all who are far off— for all whom the Lord our God will call."

They asked Peter 2000 years ago, ***what should we do?***

- **What change needs to happen?**
- ***How do we fix our lives?????***

Peter told them the same thing I'm going to tell you today.....

Acts 2:38 - Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We can't fix our spiritual conditions ourselves!!!

- You and I **need God's forgiveness.**
- That's why **we repent.**
- That's why **we get baptized.**

All of us need the gift of His Holy Spirit if –

- We are going to have a chance **at living above the spiritual onslaught** –
- That **the devil is going to throw our way**
- **To keep us from living for God.**

But we don't just make up our minds to **do this in January because it's New Years.**

- ***We do this in February - And in March - And in April -***

Joshua said in - Joshua 24:15 -NIV

¹⁵ **But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.**

Paul tells us in - Hebrews 12:1 - NIV

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us **throw off everything that hinders** and **the sin that so easily entangles**. And let us run with **perseverance (or Patience)** the **race** marked out for us, **It starts now!**

Patience, that ***means consistency.***

- Every day.
- It's not just a New Years thing.
- It's not just a Sunday thing.

It's a Walk With God ***not a visit to the spiritual Emergency Room.***

- We don't come running in here **only when our lives are falling apart.**
- We don't just pray **when we've got no alternative.**
- We don't just worship Him **because it's 11 am on a Sunday.**

We're walking with God.

- On Sunday - On Monday - On Tuesday

We're at church when the church doors are open...

- **not** just because it's Sunday.

We pray all the time...

- **Not** just because we're facing the worst thing that could ever happen to us.

Someone said... ***I need some change in my life.***

- Well, **start now!**

Someone says, ***my family really needs some help.***

- Well, **It starts now.**

It's not about New Years.....

- ***It's about the fact that Jesus loves you!!!!!!!!!!!!!!***

But **we can't** fix all this stuff ourselves.... **We need** God's help! **It starts now!**

Revelation 3:20 -

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup (or Eat) with him, and he with me.

You know we always want to put stuff off.

- We all do it.
- Sadly too many people put this decision off until it's too late.

CLOSE: It starts now!

Revelation 3:20 -

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and **open the door**, I will come in to him, and will sup (or Eat) with him, and he with me.

Do you hear that????? - "Open the door"!!!!!!!

Jesus says, "It starts now!"

- **Open the door!!!!!!!**
- Open the door of your heart
- Open the door of your mind
- Open the door of your faith

Open up and let God in.....

- It starts the moment you open that door!
- It starts the second you say yes to Him and ***begin to give your heart and life to Him.***

People want to play "tough guy."

- Nope... I can do it myself.
- Nope.. I don't need anybody's help.

I got news for you...

- At some point, you're not only going to need someone else's help,
- **but you're going to need God's help!!!!!!!**
- And you're going to need His help in a really big way.

And if you want that help.

- If you accept His grace...It can start right now.....

It starts now!!!! ***Communion *******

- The Lord's Supper celebrates deliverance from sin by Christ's death!!!!
- The Lord's Supper Is A Time To Examine Our Lives!!!

The Apostle Paul writes: ***"A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup."*** (1 Corinthians 11:28)

- The Lord's Supper is not just fulfilling a ritual of the church.
- This time today is set aside for reflection and self-examination.

Before Paul declared that a man ought to examine himself he said, ***"Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord."*** (1 Corinthians 11:27)

We must understand that in reality NONE of us are truly worthy to participate in the Lord's Supper.

He is talking about people who rush in and participate without thinking of the real meaning of what is happening.

This is why we are going to take some time to examine our motives before moving ahead.

- Paul basically is saying that if we eat the bread and drink from the cup
- Without taking time to reflect on the seriousness of the Cross
- we are entering into the guilt of those who crucified Him in the first place!

1Corinthians 11:26

²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

It starts now - - - Invitation for salvation: - Romans 10:9-10

9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Pray for God to forgive and make us worthy...

Servers – Come forward please...

Prayer for the Bread: 1 Corinthians 11:23-24

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you:

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,

²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,

“This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

Prayer for the Cup: 1 Corinthians 11:25

²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

*******Pastor returns - intro for Baptism**

It starts now - Baptism In The Name Of Jesus

Acts 4:12 - CEV

¹² Only Jesus has the power to save! His name is the only one in all the world that can save anyone.

Matthew 1:21 – CEV - ²¹ Then after her baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

******All Folks being baptized come up!!!!**

Baptism illustrates a believer’s identification with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.

Romans 6:3-4 - CEV

³ Don’t you know that all who share in Christ Jesus by being baptized also share in his death?

⁴ When we were baptized, we died and were buried with Christ. ***We were baptized, so that we would live a new life***, as Christ was raised to life by the glory of God the Father.

- The action of being immersed in the water pictures **dying and being buried with Christ.**
- The action of coming out of the water illustrates Christ’s resurrection.

Baptism by immersion, while it is the most biblical mode of identifying with Christ, it ***is not*** a prerequisite **for salvation**.

It is rather **an act of obedience**, a **public proclamation** of faith in Christ and identification with Him.

Baptism is a picture of our ***leaving our old life*** and ***becoming a new creation***.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - CEV

¹⁷ Anyone who belongs to Christ is **a new person**. The past is forgotten, and ***everything is new***.

*******All give a brief testimony** – profess their faith in Christ...

Parent's, what you are doing today with your children is you are simply giving them back to God.

You are making a powerful statement to the Lord...and this is what you are saying...

- **Lord we dedicate our child to you today, will you allow us to keep them and prepare them for Your purpose in your Kingdom!**

I charge you this day, to keep them, prepare them, teach them, and lead them by your example as loving and Godly parents from this day forward.

Baby Dedication Parent Covenant - (Covenant) -

God loves these little children more than anything in the world.

Minister: Do you now present your child before God, in solemn dedication?

Parents: *We do*

Minister: Do you consecrate yourselves as parents to bring up your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

Parents: *We do.*

Minister: Do you promise to instruct him or her in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and in the practice of prayer, and to guide him or her in the development of Christ-like character?

Parents: *We do.*

Minister: Do you promise to try to the best of your ability so to shape the home life of your child, both by family devotion and by your words and your example, that he or she will at the proper age most naturally come to an open confession of Christ, and into the fellowship and service of the church?

Parents: *We do.*

Minister: ***In the name of the Lord Jesus I dedicate this child, to God and His holy service.***

I also charge this church family, our teachers, our leaders, and every saint of God, to treat this child as one of God's own, and to do your part in leading them closer to God!

- **By one loud Amen, will you accept that charge????**
- **Let's pray for this Child and this family!**