

A New Creation - New Years Day service

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Date: 01 January 2024

Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[0 : 00] It's a joy to worship the Lord this first day of this new year. We can sing praises to our God from Scottish Psalter, Psalm 103.

Scottish Psalter, Psalm 103. That's on page 369. We can sing verses 1 down to verse 4. Psalm 103, verses 1 down to verse 4.

O thou my soul, bless God the Lord, and all that in me is, stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless. Bless O my soul, the Lord thy God, and not forgetful be of all his gracious benefits he hath bestowed on thee.

Psalm 103, verses 1 to 4. To God's praise. O thou my soul, bless God the Lord, and all that in me is, we shall be of all his holy name to magnify and bless.

Let's show my soul, the Lord thy God, and all that in me is, O thou my soul, bless God the Lord, and all that in me is, O thou my name, and all that in me is, O thou my soul, bless God the Lord, and all that in me is, Jove God the Lord, and all that in me is,

[2 : 21] O thou my soul, bless God the Lord, and all that in me is, Jove God the Lord, and all that in me is, O thou my soul, bless God the Lord, and all that in me is.

O thou my soul, bless God the Lord, and all that in me is Who will come in kindness, O unto whom he shall.

Let's join together in a word of prayer. Let's pray. Lord, we gather before you on this, the first day of this new year.

We give you praise that we come before you at this time. You've given us a dear love for us, the great privilege of having this time of worship. Help us then to fully appreciate what it is we're doing here.

As we come together today, we are giving, as it were, this new year to you. The year belongs to you anyway, as do we, as is the whole creation. But we dedicate once more ourselves to your service this year, a year where we pray we would see much fruit of the gospel work in North Ulster.

[3 : 48] As we've heard in recent weeks from your word, this is a year where we hope once more to strive to see the gospel go out. We will lay hold on every opportunity you give us, big and small, to share the good news of our Lord and Saviour.

We understand that we cannot grow your church here. That we attempt to do this or that, and we will strive to do what we can to the best of our strength, but we cannot grow your church.

Our command is to plant. Our command is to water. Our command is to tend and to care. But you alone build your church. You alone will add to the number of your people in this place.

We ask that would be our desire, our prayer, our constant prayer this new year. To afresh to pray for the souls of our family and our friends, our beloved ones who live and work and spend their lives in this place.

We bring just now before you those who are family members, those who are so close to us, who we desire to come to know Jesus for themselves. Pray the same for our close friends in this community, our neighbours, those we see day by day and week by week.

[5 : 05] Thank you, Lord, for placing us here in this mission field, placing us in our homes and our families, placing us in this village. Help us to be faithful witnesses. Help us this new year to have a renewed sense of vitality, a renewed sense of zeal, as we consider the beauty of our Saviour, his glory, his wonder, as we've been reminded from your word just how incredible he is in who he is and what he has done towards us.

We ask that beauty would then inspire us to serve him better. Help us this new year to be a year where we dedicate ourselves once more to serving our Saviour, to putting him before all others, to put our love for him before all others, our care, our concern for our souls, our family and friends, to be preeminent in our minds.

Help us not to grow tired or grow weary this new year for praying for those to come to full salvation. We thank you for the tokens of your love and mercy and kindness towards us this past year.

We thank you individually as your people here for your goodness towards us. We thank you also as a congregation as we have seen such signs of blessing. We give you praise, Lord, for our kind people here, our generous people, both with their time and with their finances.

We give you praise that we find ourselves at the start of this new year in a healthy position. We understand, Lord, that all that we have, both physical and spiritual, is all a gift from you.

[6 : 41] I will return that gift back to you this new year. Help us then, we ask, as a correct session, we pray, help us to serve your people here well. Help us to be united in our decisions and ideas and plans this new year.

Help us to be faithful in the carrying out of our duties. Forgive us for the times we are lax in that. Forgive us for the times we fail you before that. We also pray for ourselves as a wider membership, as those here who are publicly professing the name of our Saviour.

Help us as one family to proclaim your name faithfully. Forgive us for the times we have let you down this past year. We give you praise that even though we fail you in our service, you never draw away from us.

You never pull away from us your love or your concern or your care or your mercy. We also remember today, especially those of our number who do love you and who do know you, but who as of yet haven't made that public proclamation of faith.

We ask that this year, this new year, will be the year where they finally, perhaps after many years of wrestling, after many years of turmoil internally, that this year they finally come out publicly and proclaim their love for a Saviour who they have known for quite some time.

[8 : 04] Lord, we leave that with you. We pray just now for those who are not looking forward, perhaps, to this new year. Even those with our own number, you know the exact details and information, Lord.

We pray just now for those who are suffering physically, mentally, those who are in pain even at this moment. Those who this new year brings a new set of great challenges, of new worries, of anxiety as they think forward as to what they face this year.

Lord, we ask you to be with them and encourage them. And they would know that as you're with them, that we are also with them as brothers and sisters and that we would come alongside them and serve them as best we can.

Pray just now for those who have attended this means of worship this past year and those who attend this new year. Lord, give us, we ask, the opportunity to see the glorious news of some coming to faith even this day.

We'll leave again that with you. Pray just now for those who will not pray for themselves this year. Pray just now for our friends in this community, our family in this community who have no word of their souls.

[9 : 16] We ask this to be a year where they perhaps show interest in coming out and being part of our family here. We thank you, Lord, for those who have shown interest the last few weeks even of coming out and of taking part in our worship.

We ask that you would encourage them to become part of this church family. Help us this year to serve you well, to serve you faithfully. We bring before you our nation this year.

As we go into a new year, we pray for those in leadership over us, our first minister and our prime minister. Pray for wise decisions to be made for our nation and for our country.

We ask once more that you would lead them to come to a saving knowledge of you, that they would begin this new year of themselves having seen and known Jesus as their own personal saviour.

Pray, Lord, for a wider world. You know the millions of prayers that are going up by this point, the millions of prayers of your people across this world. You hear them all, you see them all, as we heard even last night.

[10 : 21] You call them lovely, you call them yours, their voice is sweet to you and we are precious to you as your people. We unite together with a worldwide church. We also unite together with a church that has gone into glory.

The saints who once sat in these pews, the saints who we at this time of year especially remember, our beloved brothers and sisters who are taken from this time and taken into eternity, who at this very moment are worshipping you in glory.

As we worship you just now on earth, our worship and their worship join together with one voice, with church triumphant and church still militant, the church in glory and the church still on earth, we unite our voices together this new year to praise you, our glorious Lord.

Forgive us our sins, forgive us the sin and backsliding of this past year. Forgive us, Lord, and take away our shame and misery of this past year. Help us this new year to rely fully and totally once more on the finished work of Jesus who cleanses and takes away the sin of all who come to him, whose death is sufficient, whose sacrifice is perfect and whose name is glorious.

It's in his name and it's for his sake we ask these many things. Amen. Let's turn to read in God's word a passage I'm sure we've read plenty of times in a new year but it's nonetheless glorious.

[11 : 44] 2 Corinthians chapter 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 5. That's on page 908 of the church Bibles. 2 Corinthians 5 on page 908.

As Paul goes through this chapter, he's building up the logic of his argument that our home is not here. We live here for a time but our eternal home for those who know the Lord is of course in glory.

2 Corinthians chapter 5. Let's hear the word of God together. For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. If indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent we groan, being burdened.

Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

[13 : 05] So, we are always of good courage. We know that whilst we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith and not by sight.

Yes, we are of good courage. We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So wherever we are at home or away we make it our aim to please Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what He has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others that what we are is known to God and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again by giving you cause to boast about us so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not what is in the heart.

For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God. If we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this, that one has died for all, therefore all have died.

And He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.

[14 : 29] From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh, even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake, He made Him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Amen. We give praise to God for His holy and His perfect Word. We can again sing to God's praise once more from the Psalter and this time from Psalm 98.

[15 : 42] The Scottish Psalter, Psalm 98. We can sing again verses 1 down to verse 4 of the Psalm. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 98, verse 1 down to verse 4.

We'll sing a new song to the Lord for wonders He hath done His right hand and His holy arm and victory have won the Lord God His salvation hath caused to be known His justice in the heavens, in the heathen sight He openly hath shown.

Psalm 98, verses 1 to 4 to God's praise. O sing a new song to the Lord for wonders He hath done His right hand il The Theech of müssen economy and rational pasa

Off Spirit from outside our■ God bless you.

Thank you.

[18 : 35] Thank you.

For their sake died and was raised. And down to verse 17. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. us, myself included, all the new diet plans, all the new work plans we've all set ourselves, all the projects I'm sure we've planned to have this year and last year.

All these things are good and in their own way they're good for us at times. I wonder if this new year, it might well be the new year for you to have the ultimate fresh start.

[20 : 17] Not weight loss, not a new project, not a new idea, not painting a new room in the house, all good things, but a serious, proper, fresh start.

That's what we're looking at today in these verses, what it is to have a real fresh start with Jesus. Now, we've all heard the gospel. You've heard the gospel countless times.

Some of you here have heard the gospel for decades and decades and decades. You've had plenty of new years spent in this building. If you allow me just for today to hear the gospel one more time as we begin this new year.

And as we look at these verses, just taking each verse, and for each verse, there's plenty of, there's a sermon or more in each verse, but just for each verse, we can take one simple truth. One simple truth.

First of all, in verse 15, we can see that this new year, we can have a new purpose, a new purpose. Then in verse 16, we can see that this new year, we can have a new understanding.

[21 : 23] And finally, of course, in verse 17, this new year, we can be a whole new person. A new purpose, a new understanding, and a whole new person.

First of all, then, verse 15, a whole new purpose. And he died for all. He died for all, and for those who live, may no longer live for themselves, but for him who was for their sake, died and was raised.

A whole new purpose. He died. And because Jesus died and rose again, it means that this new year, we might no longer live for ourselves.

We no longer have to live for ourselves. What does it look like to live for ourselves? We all know this, but just to remind ourselves. First of all, to live for ourselves and our values and how we see and interact with the world, it means we're quite materialistic.

Now, I'm sure there's not many here who would say that they are materialistic. You wouldn't say your life is governed by shiny new things. You're mature people.

[22 : 37] You've lived a good life. You've got families. And you've seen the world, and you know the world. And you aren't taken in by shiny new gadgets. Some of you might be. I certainly am at times.

Shiny new gadgets often call my name. But we're not talking about shiny new gadgets. It goes far deeper than that. The question is, have you taken on, as it were, the morals of this world?

And the truth is, because we're born into it, you're born with the morals of this world. You might not be after the brand new iPhone, the brand new laptop. But still, in your life, you have a materialistic worldview.

In a sense that your whole world is based around this world. It's based around the created thing itself. In other words, morning to night, week after week, month after month, you have very little time for God.

Very little concern for God. Outside, perhaps, these four walls. And you spend your life thinking about yourself and your family and your job and your life. Good things.

[23 : 44] But that's all you think about. Your priority is the world. Your priority is yourself. And it's uncomfortable to be reminded of that.

But Paul knows, as Paul writes, he reminds these Christians that once we did live for ourselves, once we lived for all this world had to give us.

It also means that before we're saved, before we're made a new creature, a new creation in Christ, our old mind had an old perception of the world.

That's quite sad. Because in this world, we see a world with no justice. We see a world with no peace. And if we don't have Jesus as our king, as our saviour, then there is no justice.

From a world view where there's no saviour, we live and die on a cold planet. We evolved over billions of years from a microorganism, just by chance.

[24 : 53] We live in this cold rock, hot rock, hurtling through space for no reason. No purpose. You live, you die.

No one cares. You're forgotten about. All for nothing. That is the world view we take away, Christ. It's a sad, cold, pretty horrifying view.

There's no justice. There's no purpose. There's no hope. Once we thought that way. There's also a lack of self-value.

Unless you come to Jesus, you're always going to judge yourself and how you are against the standards of those around you. And that's a game no one wins. You're always looking to be a better person.

And you fail at that. And the next year, well, I'll try harder to be a better person. You fail at that. There's no wrong thing in trying to serve better and be a better person. That's a good thing. But because you keep doing that without Jesus, you realize you can never be a good person.

[26 : 03] It's a burden you lay on yourself that can never be taken off you. And that's painful. We once lived for ourselves.

And perhaps most distressing of all, before we knew Christ, and for those here as of yet who don't know Christ, you have, most tragically and most painfully, no eternal hope.

So this new year, for all the excitement that you have, and we all have together, all the joy and all the good things which we pray lies ahead for all of us, without Jesus, there is, of course, no living hope for any of us.

Such were some of you. You once lived for yourselves. The people Paul is speaking to here, they now want instead, they now live for Christ.

I died for all, but those who live might no longer live for themselves. So what does it look like this new year to have a new purpose? To no longer live for yourselves, as we said, but now this year to live instead for Christ.

[27 : 15] What does that mean? If you were to put your faith and trust in Christ this very morning, this very afternoon of this very first day of this new year, what could this year look like to have a new purpose?

Well, it means you can now live for Jesus instead. See, the truth is, you can still love your family, look after your family, you still look after yourself, you can still be excited about the brand new phones coming out, you can still have all these things, you can still be a good parent and grandparent, but apart from all of that, you can now live for Jesus.

You can now live a life that you were created to live. You were born to worship him. You were created in your mother's womb to know him and to serve and to love him.

You were created with that very function in your brain, in your soul. Until you come to know him, you can't live that full life. And the truth is, and as Christians here, we take the blame at times.

Perhaps we live lives and we are bad examples of what it is to live a joy-filled life in Christ. And to our shame, we confess, we are often bad examples.

[28 : 27] But don't look to us, whatever you do, don't look to us. Look to Jesus. It's to him who gives a new life. It's why, until you come to Jesus, your life will always feel just a bit off.

I'm not saying you're not a good person. I'm not saying you're not a diligent parent or grandparent or friend. I know quite a number of you now quite well. And you're nice people.

You're all very likable people. You're all very kind people. You've been kind to Emma and myself. All these things are true. And we praise God for it. But in yourself, in your very heart of hearts, you will not find peace until you come to Jesus.

You won't find a real purpose for your life. You'll always have that question in the back of your mind. Surely there's more to life than this. Surely there's more. When you come to Jesus, you find out there is more.

You were born. Your very atoms of your very body were snitted together. And your very sinews and bones and muscles placed together to worship him.

[29 : 36] Until you do so, you won't find your true purpose in life. Come to Jesus this new year. Find your new purpose in him.

And find that you're not any longer materially bound to this world as Paul said there. Yes, we live a while here. But we'd rather be away with the Lord. Speak to any Christian.

They'll tell you that. We love being here. We love our families. And we love our relationships. And we love the world God has given us. But we are simply passing through.

And we know that. Our home is here for a while. But our eternal home is not here. There is more to us than what we see and know in this world.

My friends. I said last night. I'll say it again. I can't say it yesterday. If you forgive me.

[30 : 34] Standing here, I am very much aware that I can't convince you. I'm not a salesman. I'm not trying to sell you a car. I am here quite simply to remind you what you know already.

You have to come to Jesus. And if you do, you will find a new purpose for this new year. A new direction for this new year with Jesus. A new purpose. No longer living for yourself.

No longer having to rely on yourself. But instead finding your full reliance on the one who loved you. Who gave himself for you. If only you would come and believe in him. A new purpose for this new year.

Also we see in verse 16. A new understanding for this new year. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh.

We regard him thus no longer. This new year, if you come to Jesus, you can see him in a whole new way. For it was a time where every single person in this room.

[31 : 38] We all viewed Jesus in a fleshly way. In a human way. In a very low way. We once regarded Christ. We once thought about Christ according to the flesh.

What are these old thoughts perhaps about Jesus? What ways of thinking that says that Jesus was perhaps quite simply a good man. He was a good man who did good things.

He was a kind man. He was a good teacher. And perhaps, and I suspect this is a case for most of us here today. You believe actually that what Jesus is saying is true.

But he wasn't just a good man. But you believe he was the son of God. You believe there was something at least divine about him somehow. You understand, intellectually understand, that he was sent from God.

You know all the facts and figures about him. But as of yet, you have an old understanding of him. You think he is still a cold, distant, uncaring saviour.

[32 : 47] And you can't understand how we Christians, like yesterday's sermons, how we can talk about him as one who loves us and who calls us beautiful. You think, that language, how can you apply that romantic language, that close personal language to a saviour who is so cold and so distant, who feels so far away and so uncaring.

You still think of him, perhaps, as judge over you. Looming over you, waiting just for you to mess up one last time so he can strike you down finally.

You think about the saviour, the glorious saviour. That's how you view him. And perhaps that comes from your youth. Perhaps it comes from hearing about a saviour who is all judge, who is all judgment, who is all wrath, without hearing about a saviour who brings peace, who brings hope, who brings salvation.

Perhaps that's your story. If it is, I am sorry. I am sorry that is all you heard about. The balance has to be there. Yes, there is wrath. Yes, there is judgment. But God brings a full story.

That where there is wrath, there is forgiveness in Jesus. Where there is judgment, the debts are paid in Jesus. Where there is fear of the Lord, perhaps, yes, there is peace and love in knowing Jesus.

[34 : 15] Perhaps the first time you've heard a full story this new year, and you'll hear the full story this new year, you can have a new understanding. Perhaps you still think that to come to Jesus means you must first perfect your life.

You must first live a way that is good enough that then you can come and become a Christian properly. You might think that Christ requires of you a certain level of holiness.

Well, if I read my Bible this much, if I act a certain way enough, then surely then by the end of this year, I'll be in a place to then consider coming to Jesus.

That's an old way of thinking. That's an earthly way of thinking. That is quite honestly an anti-biblical way of thinking. The Bible is the opposite way.

The Bible says you'll never be good enough. You can't be good enough. That's why Jesus came. This new year, the gospel hope is you can't impress God. You won't impress God.

[35 : 20] Don't try and impress God. Instead, do what God actually has told you to do. Come to Jesus. Simple as that. Simple as that.

And this new year, instead of having the old understanding, come and find the new understanding. That Paul talks about in verse 16. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, all these old thoughts, we regard him thus no longer.

How then do we now regard Christ? If you come to know Jesus this new year, how can you then understand him? Well, you'll find a saviour who no longer hangs over you in judgment.

You go from a distance to a closeness of your best friend, of your elder brother.

You go from interest, perhaps, to love. Right now, I am sure and I know for certain that many of you who don't know Jesus as your saviour, you know him intellectually.

[36 : 26] I don't pretend for a second that half of you, many of you, most of you, if all of you, could quote scripture better than me.

You know your catechism far better than me, I assure you that much. You know your confession, perhaps, better than me. You can quote to me theological texts better than I can. You don't have to give me, for me to give you the page numbers in the Bible.

You know where the books in the Bible are perfectly, instantly. You have a head knowledge of Jesus. You know all about him. Your understanding about who he is is complete, almost.

But you don't know him. You don't know him. He is not a figure of history to be studied. He is not a part of theological intrigue to be dug into.

He is a living person who you have to get to know personally. Because the truth is, all the facts and figures, all the head knowledge, it's good.

[37 : 31] It will serve you well one day if only you first come to him. It all means nothing otherwise. You're researching a person you will never meet unless you come to him.

Once you come to him. Then you don't just learn about him. You actually learn to love him. To know him. And you learn what it is to be loved by him too.

In a phrase, you go from being, this new year, if you come to Christ, you go from being a stranger to a friend. The gospel is as simple as that.

A stranger to a friend. My friends, this new year, again, I could beg, but I won't save you. But I do beg. I do plead. Come to know Jesus.

Come to have this new understanding. Don't be happy just to know about him. But instead, strive not to know about him better. But to actually know him better.

[38 : 34] And you can't do that until you first come to know him. As saviour, as king, as friend. And then you will grow in your knowledge. There's time for that. A new purpose.

A new understanding. And finally, a new creation. A whole new creation. Verse 17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. It's interesting. It doesn't really translate very well. But in the Greek. Well, for English, we had to add extra words here.

It just is. And ah, just to help us understand it better. But in the Greek, this verse, verse 17, is much shorter. It's much shorter because the message being conveyed is much more blunt, perhaps.

Therefore, isn't there. Not really. What is there in the Greek? Anyone in Christ's new creation. That's the Greek. Anyone in Christ's new creation.

[39 : 36] Now, if nothing else, in this last 20 minutes, I've been very efficient today. 20 minutes. The last five minutes, please remember these five words from God's word.

Anyone in Christ's new creation. That is the simple gospel. That's all I'm going to have for you this whole next year. And you know that already. I'll try and make it as interesting as possible and add extra bits of information and we'll go through God's word, Old and New Testament.

The very root of our sermons and my message to you. Anyone in Christ's new creation. That is the essence of this verse. That is the essence of the gospel. Therefore, if anyone, anyone.

You've heard it before. I'll say it again. The gospel is open to all who come and cry out for salvation. We put stipulations and boundaries on it to our shame and to our judgment.

But Christ does not. Anyone is open to come to Jesus and receive his mercy, receive forgiveness, receive salvation from death.

[40 : 49] Anyone in Christ. We're so used to hearing in Christ. And there's a whole new series we'll look at early next year.

But here, the context of in Christ, it's setting up a fence, really. A wall. A wall that can't be sat upon. There's two options here.

Two clear options. In or out. I said I was going to speak plainly today. And that is as plain as I'll be. Two options are in or out.

He is the only hope this new year. We're either in Christ this new year or out of Christ this new year. There is no middle ground. You either know him or you don't know him.

Serve him or don't serve him. Love him or don't. There is, again, no middle ground. There are those who are closer to one side than the other. Absolutely. There are those here, and I'm sure we pray many of you here, you're growing and you're understanding and you want to know more about him.

[41 : 52] You long to be saved, perhaps. And you're getting closer and closer. But still, it is binary. In or out. You know him or you don't.

You're a new creation or you're not. What it is to be a new creation. This is a glorious truth, of course, for every Christian here today.

Every new Christian we pray this year from our number here. We might all well try and reinvent ourselves some way this year. Try and reinvent our plans in life, our body, our minds, our habits.

All fine. But this reinvention here, this new creation, it's not a fad that will pass. We'll make a gym membership out this year, but a gym membership will go in the drawer at some point.

We'll be null and void by next year. This new creation, this change in our lives, it's not a passing fad. It's not a passing idea. Those of us who are made new creations, that is from now.

[43 : 03] Not for next year. Next ten years. It's from now for all time. This gives a Christian a great assurance of faith. Don't think for a second, just a word of encouragement to the Christians here.

Don't think for a second that you're the only person who struggles with a lack of assurance. If that is you, I don't know precisely. The reformers, Calvin, certainly did.

Your minister certainly does. Most ministers I've spoken to, most of my colleagues, I guess, certainly have all struggled in various ways. We all struggle together, Christians. Brothers and sisters, a lack of assurance at times.

The Bible is clear. If we know Jesus, if we love Jesus, we are a new creation. We'll never be made to be old again. We have been made new. What God changes, we cannot change back, even by backsliding, even by arrogance, even by our occasional slides back into sin.

If we know the Lord and love the Lord, he has told us we are a new creation. While the Lord changes one way, he does not change back again. It's almost heretical to say that.

[44 : 15] God makes new creations. And yes, as new creations, we make a mess of things at times. And this new year, undoubtedly, we will make a mess of things at times. But we're still a new creation.

It is him who holds on to us. And if we're saying that somehow he lets us go, we are saying then that somehow his power to hold on is somehow insufficient.

It's a dangerous thing to start saying our saviour is insufficient in any way. He holds on to us. He keeps a hold of us. The old has gone. To be made a new creature this year, it means the old has gone.

Dear friend, you can lose all the shame and guilt of sin. All gone. Your whole past life, all gone. Now, the community might still remember. Your family will still remember.

My friend, you will still remember. There are Christians here who still struggle, I know, with the guilt and shame of their past lives. The things they said and did. And I'm sorry to say that as a consequence of sin.

[45 : 20] But you can know for certain, despite what you might think or feel, what lingers on to you, you are a new creature.

The old has gone. In your sight, in your family's sight, in the community's sight, perhaps you're still the same old you. But where it matters, in the sight of God, he declares, if you come and know Jesus, you are a new creation.

The old has gone. The old, not the wording, has passed away. A sense of that is an ongoing sense. It's bad grammar, actually, in the Greek.

But it's bad grammar for a good reason. And Paul knew his grammar well. So if Paul's doing bad grammar, it's for a good reason. It's bad grammar. Quite literally, the old is still going away.

The image here is it's gone and it keeps going on eternally far away. The old man, the old woman, the old you, gone.

[46 : 24] Dead. Forgotten. And now this new creature. This new being. Again, we're still you. You're still you as a Christian.

You still have your same personality times. The same quirks. We're a family. Every one of us is as different and as odd as the next one. We're all different people. We've all got quirks of personality.

That's for sure. Not bad things. But you're a new creature. What does happen is that the old, hell-bound person, the old, hell-bound soul is now gone.

And you've been brought from death to life. And made what? Well, made a new creation. This is the new you.

The new has come. Friends, begin this new year with the hope you can have a new start. Not a temporary new start.

[47 : 28] Not a year-long new start. But a brand new start. From now into all eternity. That is the hope. Begin this new year with a new purpose.

Having Jesus as a focal point of all that you want to do. And all that you are. Begin this new year with a new understanding. Whoever you once thought about Jesus.

Whatever wrong way perhaps you think about him even now. Leave that aside and see what the word of God actually says about him. He is close to all. Cry out to him. And our prayer is you begin this new year as a new creation.

With the old far, far gone. And the new now beginning. So that together we might be able to say the glorious, beautiful words of the end of verse 21 there.

For our sake, this is a Christian's hope to our friends. For our sake, he that is God made him as Jesus. For our sake, God made Jesus to be sin.

[48 : 38] Who knew no sin. So that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Let's bow our heads now.

Word of prayer. Lord, we thank you for the great and glorious gift of the simple gospel. Help us this new year. To find our full hope.

Our full purpose. Our full understanding. In Jesus and him alone. Help us to find. No time for anything else until we first come to him.

Help us to make coming to know Jesus our priority. This new year. Pray just now for the quiet work of the spirit. As he works just now in the hearts and minds of your people here today.

We give you praise that when your word goes out, we have the full assurance. You will accomplish. And indeed you are accomplishing your perfect work. That your word never returns to you void. Never returns to you without having fully accomplished a purpose with which you've set it to accomplish.

[49 : 42] Pray just now for the quiet work in some hearts and minds here today. Pray that pruning work. That quiet growing work. As a seed sown and begins to flourish and grow.

First beneath the surface. Then slowly a small green shoot. And slowly a full harvest. Pray just now for those here who are asking the big questions of Jesus.

Who are wondering whether this gospel is too good to be true. Lord, you speak to them and show them. It's all been done for them. If only they would come. Help us this new year as your people here to serve you well.

To encourage one another. To sing praises clearly with hearts and minds full of joy. To see and make full use of every gospel opportunity you give us. Ask all these things.

In the precious name of our glorious saviour. And for his sake. Amen. We can bring our time to a conclusion. Sing psalms and psalm 40.

[50 : 41] Sing psalms and psalm 40. It's on page 50. Off the psalm book. Sing psalms and psalm 40 on page 50. We can sing verses 1 down to verse 5.

The prayer is that this would be your psalm for this new year. That you could sing the words of a psalmist at some point this year. And apply them to yourself.

At once you were stuck. Once you were in that pit. But now he has put your feet on solid ground. And given you a song of praise for him. I waited long upon the Lord.

He heard my cry and turned to me. He raised me from the slimy pit. And from the mire he pulled me free. He set my feet on solid rock. A place to stand both firm and broad.

He put a new song in my mouth. A joyful hymn of praise to God. Psalm 40 verses 1 to 5. To God's praise. Amen. I waited long upon the Lord.

[51 : 48] He heard my cry. And turned to me. He raised me from the slimy room.

And from the mire he pulled me free. He said to me.

He raised me outside of heaven. He raised me in without any place. He had put the spirit inside, O firm and broad. And with his name, So give my love a joyful hymn of praise to all.

May he well live with God in here, and on the heart of O'erry night.

Blessed are they, with us the Lord. We shall let the Lord and the Lord's name.

[53 : 30] The wonders of the Lord, the Lord and the Lord.

How good they are, you can't for us. How far beyond, how far to know.

Let the Lord be blessed. In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, both of you now and forevermore.

Amen.