

## Why Christians Alone May Expect Happiness In The New Year.

Text: Gal 3:23-29

Suggested Hymns:

552, 161, 35, 265, 554

1) They Alone Are Freed From The Bondage  
And Curse Of The Law

2) They Alone Are The Children Of God  
And Heirs Of Eternal Life

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Galatians 3:23–29, *<sup>23</sup> But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

*<sup>25</sup> But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. <sup>26</sup> For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

On New Year's Day the whole human family, peering into the future, is divided into two classes of people, those who expect to be happy in the new year, and those who have just cause to fear lest they might not be happy.

The first class, those who expect to be happy, enter into the new year with shouts of joy. They watch the old year out to be there as soon as the new year puts in its appearance. And when the hand of the clock points to the midnight hour and by the first stroke the new year is ushered in, their joy knows no bounds.

The old year is gone, gone with its failures and disappointments, buried in the past, and they have lived to see the new year fresh, bright, and fair. With a

merry heart they wish each other a Happy New Year, and happiness is what they expect the new year to bring them.

The second class, those who have a just cause to fear lest they might not be happy in the new year, can scarcely be distinguished from the first class as to their outward conduct.

New Year's Day is a day of universal joy, and they are almost irresistibly drawn into the current, and they must swim along. Why should they not expect happiness in the new year when everybody else does?

But when they begin to think and reflect, when calmly they survey the state and condition in which the new year has found them, their heart beats faster, and they realise that, perhaps, the new year will bring even greater griefs than those that lie behind.

But this one thing is certain: nobody desires to be miserable and unhappy in the year which he has lived to see. Everybody wishes a happy new year as much for himself as he does for others.

So who may expect a happy new year? Will those people expect a happy new year who give no thought to God on this day, who live without God in the world, and let the years roll by without making any provision for their immortal souls? No; these people deceive themselves; for true happiness comes from God. How can they expect God to grant them happiness when they deny Him and do not care for Him?

This means that Christians alone, those who trust in God for the future, will expect a happy new year. This is plainly shown in the Epistle of the day in which the Apostle describes the happiness of the true believers. Let us consider, *Why Christians Alone May Expect Happiness In The New Year*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Christians Alone May Expect Happiness In The New Year Because They Alone Are Freed From The Bondage And Curse Of The Law.**

In the beginning of our Epistle the Apostle plainly states that the Christians, and the Christians alone, are freed from the bondage and from the curse of the Law. He says, <sup>23</sup> *But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.* <sup>24</sup> *Therefore the law was*

*our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* <sup>25</sup> ***But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.***

Here the Apostle speaks of the time of the Old Testament, and of the New Testament. And what does he say about the time of the Old Testament? He says that at that time the believers were kept under the Law, confined by the Law. They were under the dominion of the Law, and bound by numerous precepts which they had to fulfil. Just think of their laws as to the sacrifices!

For every important event in the family and for every transgression they had to offer a sacrifice. But all these sacrifices pointed to Christ who was to bring the sacrifice of His life upon the altar of the cross as a holy sacrificial offering for the sins of the world. And thus ***“the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith”*** as the Apostle says. Tutor also means schoolmaster, custodian or guardian.

In the time of the Old Testament the Law did the service of a tutor, and the tutor, in the sense in which the Apostle uses the word, was not a teacher, but a slave.

In the days of St. Paul the wealthy Greeks and Romans had slaves to attend to the boys of the family. These slaves did not teach the boys, but led them to the school, accompanied them, and looked after them in play-hours.

The believers in the time of the Old Testament were led as children by the Law. They had no liberty. They were under the schoolmaster. But what does the Apostle say about the time of the New Testament? He says: <sup>25</sup> ***But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.***”

In the time of the New Testament the tutor has been dismissed. The believers are no longer kept under the Law. The Law is not the leading feature in the New Testament, but the Gospel, the glad tidings of the forgiveness of our sins through the Saviour’s blessed work, which is apprehended by faith.

What has been said shows that the believers in the time of the New Testament are freed from the bondage of the Law. But the most aggravating part of the Law is its curse. God said in the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 27:26, <sup>26</sup> ***‘Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law.’***

And this was said not only as to the moral law, which is contained in the holy Ten Commandments, but also as to the ceremonial law, which dealt with the sacrifices and the order of service. Now the ceremonial law has been abolished in the New Testament, but the moral law is still in vogue, and never will be abolished.

All people are required to keep the moral law, and the curse is pronounced upon all those who do not keep the Lord's commandments. But who keeps these commandments as they should be kept? No one. We are all sinners. We all transgress the Law.

And yet there are people whom the Law's curse does not reach. Who are they? The believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are sinners as well as all the others; they have not kept the Law. But another, that is Jesus Christ, has kept the Law for them, and that induces God to look upon them as if they themselves had kept the Law. They are justified by faith, as the Apostle says.

For His dear Son's sake, who has suffered and died for their transgressions and has kept for them the whole Law, God does not lay their sins to their charge, and saves from them the curse of the Law.

For His dear Son's sake in whom they have believed God imputes to them Christ's perfect righteousness, and though daily they sin much and deserve nothing but punishment, they are holy and righteous in the sight of God, and freed from the curse of the Law.

Now tell me, who of the two, may expect happiness in the new year on which he has entered: the person who is still under the curse of the Law because he did not use the Law as a mirror, and did not thereby come to the knowledge of his sin, and did not obtain faith in Jesus Christ who fulfilled the Law for us all, or the person who is freed from the curse of the Law through Christ, and who lives in the faith of the Son of God? Certainly, the latter one.

Who of the two may expect happiness in the new year: the person whose countless sins God has entered in the book of His accounts, whose enormous debt remains charged and unpaid, whose sins in the new year also will be recorded against him, or the person whose entire debt has been cancelled with the blood of Jesus Christ, whose transgressions have all been blotted out, and whose sins in the new year God will not remember? Certainly, the latter one.

Who may expect happiness in the new year on which he has entered: the person who is subject to God's anger and wrath, and who must expect nothing but punishment for his sins, **or** the person who has a merciful Father in heaven who is pleased with him and means well with him? Certainly, the latter one.

This means that the Christian alone may expect true happiness in the new year. No matter how we shall fare in the new year, and if we should meet with ever so many adversities, we shall be happy in this year of our Lord, and all things shall work together for our good.

## **2. Christians Alone May Expect Happiness In The New Year Because They Alone Are The Children Of God And Heirs Of Eternal Life.**

The second reason why Christians alone may expect happiness in the new year is, because they alone are the children of God and heirs of eternal life.

The Apostle says, <sup>26</sup> *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.* <sup>27</sup> *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* <sup>28</sup> *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* <sup>29</sup> *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Here the Apostle says two beautiful things of the Christians. Firstly, he says that those who are the children of God are those people who have put on Christ in Baptism, who are clad in the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, so that before His face they all appear alike, whether they be of Jewish or Gentile ancestry, slaves or free, men or women, all are one in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, he says that they are God's heirs who shall inherit all those heavenly treasures which God has in store for them.

O how joyfully, then, my dear Christians, you can enter upon a new year of your earthly life! Why should you not expect happiness in the new year? You have been baptised in Jesus' name. And do you understand what Baptism means for you?

The Apostle says that you have put on Christ in Baptism. You have put Him on as you would put on a garment. You have been clad in His perfect righteousness which hides and covers all your sins, so that God does not and will not see them. Even though you are a sinner and remain a sinner as long as you

live, for His dear Son's sake whom you have put on in Baptism, in whom you have believed, God has adopted you for His dear child.

God looks at you with the same favour with which He looks at His own Son whom He declared at His Baptism in the river Jordan, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*<sup>1</sup> What, then, must you expect in the new year? Nothing but happiness. For how could your dear Father in heaven, who rules and governs all things, see you miserable and unhappy?

That is impossible. We read in Psalm 103:13, <sup>13</sup> *As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him.* He will provide for all your bodily and spiritual needs. He will hear your prayers. He will bless you everywhere.

And what of it; if various tribulations should come upon you in the new year? What of it; if your heavenly Father should deem it best for you that you suffer, and that your earthly joys be but few? Can that make you unhappy? No; as nothing shall separate us from the love of God, so nothing shall destroy our happiness; for even your trials and tribulations shall be turned into blessings because you are God's child.

Remember that you are an heir of eternal life. Even if happiness would depart from our hearts for a single moment, we know that we are heirs of eternal life, and that heaven is our eternal home.

It is true that this may be the last year of our earthly journey and that death may seize any one of us before the year is ended. You are sitting in your seat today, but before the twelve months have gone by you may be resting beneath the sod. But what does a Christian lose in death? Nothing but that which is harmful to him, his sins, his troubles, and his tribulations. And what does he gain thereby? All that is profitable, blessedness in the highest degree, bliss without end.

O the blessed change! He gains joy for sorrow, life for death, he is more than recompensed for all the sufferings of this present time. For he is God's heir, God has willed to him His glory, he is received into the city of God, into the heavenly Jerusalem, where the streets are paved with gold, and the gates are made of pearl, and the sun never ceases to shine, where there are pleasures for evermore.

Today, we have seen that Christians may expect happiness in the new year, even if it would prove to be the last year of your earthly pilgrimage, because you are children of God and heirs of eternal life.

Note that Christians alone have a claim to this expectation. For what good thing can the person expect who is not a child, but an enemy of God, and not an heir of eternal life? Examine yourself, then, my friend!

If you are not a Christian, or if all along you have been a damnable hypocrite, having faith on the lips, but not in the heart, let me implore you to begin a new life with this day, a life in the faith of the Son of God, to surrender your heart to God that He might change it and make you a new creature.

Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart! Do not resist the Spirit of God! Submit to His pleading! Let Him kindle the flame of true faith in your soul, and you will never regret it. For you will be truly happy both in this life and in that life which is to come. As Scripture says, ***Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.***<sup>2</sup> Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 3:17

<sup>2</sup> Luke 11:28