

# American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org  
Encouraging Christians to guard their heart January 2024

## A Fresh New Year

By Steve Huston



The New Year is, for many people, like a fresh piece of white, clean, unwrinkled paper. In a sense, it's almost holy; we hardly dare to even think of touching it. It's reminiscent of that fresh fallen snow without a footprint; there's the anticipation of children playing in it, yet we would like to keep the serenity of that undisturbed field before us.

We know that disruptions must come and that they will wrinkle our fresh paper which represents our lives, but we hope to take a modicum of control over it by making New Year's resolutions, promises to ourselves that things will be different, come what may. We hope that, at least to start, we can tread lightly in the fresh snowy field of our minds or that as we carefully write on this clean

sheet of paper called the New Year, it will not get marred with too many "smudges," "misspelled words," or "wrinkles."

What we forget in our New Year's nearly obsessive-compulsive desire for control is that life is messy. People are messy. Even we are messy. Thanks to sin, the paper is not nearly as white as we have imagined it, the freshly fallen snow isn't as clean as we had hoped, and the search for control and peace that we longed for cannot be found within. That's right, true peace and joy can only be found outside ourselves. Actually, they spring from eternity and we will only find the control we long for there as well.

Peace is only found in God, the God who dwells in eternity: **"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.** Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. (Isaiah 26:3-4)" Want peace this year? Keep your thoughts focused

upon God and your actions in accordance with trusting Him.

Joy springs from eternity; its source cannot be found in time: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my (Jesus') joy might remain in you, and that **your joy might be full.** (John 15:11)" What things? Abiding in Jesus, bearing fruit, and being purged by him. One children's chorus sings: **"Jesus and Others and You, what a wonderful way to spell joy..."** There are a host of verses that would have us put Jesus in first place, followed by others, putting our own needs and desires last. If you would have real joy, put Jesus first in all you do.

It's paradoxical, but to have control you must submit yourself to God, trusting in him. We will either be slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. In submitting to God and his commands (becoming slaves to righteousness), we find true freedom – real control! We may not be able to control our circumstances, but by God's

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grace we are able to trust in him and control our responses to those circumstances.

Knowing that God's got this, I can trust him and be at peace. Knowing that Christ is sovereignly in control, I can have real joy in the midst of sorrow! Romans 6:19-23 states: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. **But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.** For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life

through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Many resolutions made at this time of year have to do with dieting. Here are a few dietary changes that won't add calories and won't add inches to your waistline, but by following them might we grow spiritually plump.

"Hunger and thirst after righteousness. (Matt. 5:6)" It brings a blessing, drives you to the Word, and strengthens your soul as you live in love and holiness. Here you will also find the peace, joy, and control we've already discussed. Hungering after righteousness is an acquired taste; will you feed freely from the trough of the world or the banqueting table of the Word? Will you strive to please the lusts of the flesh or the love of the Spirit?

Start with the "sincere milk of the word" and graduate to the "strong meat"; there's a place for both in the heart and mind of the believer. Eat your fill and grow. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. (1 Pet. 2:2)" "But strong

meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Heb. 5:14)"

This is why there is so little discernment in the church today. People aren't chewing on the strong meat. Instead, they are content to sit in their nests like baby birds, trusting that what is being chewed up and spit into their mouths is truth. They're not chewing, digesting, and allowing the Holy Ghost to lead them into all truth. We must be in the Word for ourselves through daily devotions, meditation, and Scripture memory. That being said, it's vital to be active in a strong Bible-preaching, Word-guarding, application-bringing church.

May the New Year find a new you, desiring to grow in love, rebuking, reproofing, and exhorting with all longsuffering and doctrine. Regardless our circumstances, let us be bold and faithful, being about the business of praising and glorifying God and magnifying the Master, Jesus Christ!



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