

## **A Right Spirit**

**By Paul R. Blake**

*"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me"* (Psalm 51:10). A new year begins this day, full of hope, desire, and good intentions. The first of January always reminds me of things that are new. When a friend or neighbor buys a new car and invites me to ride in it, I always savor that 'fresh from the factory' smell in their car. Sitting in that new car gives one the feeling that this vehicle has the capacity and power to take one anywhere and everywhere in the world. It soon fades away, and the car starts smelling like aftershave, or the family dog, or French fries, or pine tree scent cards swinging from the rear view mirror. But, for a few brief days, the car smells new... an unmistakable scent.

The New Year reminds me of the new tablets we were given at school at the beginning of each semester. The paper smelled like new things in the storage room and looked as if it had the potential to hold a lifetime's worth of writing and ciphering. Yet after a few days, the cover began to wear and sometimes tear, a scribble or two would show up on the back, and the tablet showed signs of thinning as the pages were filled with assignments and handed in.

January the first reminds me of a new acquaintance, filling me with wonder and excitement over where this relationship might go. Will we become friends; will this person obey the Gospel; what kinds of conversations will we have; what kinds of hobbies will we share?

New things energize our thinking and feeling because they hold the promise of the unknown and the potential of future treasure. We are eager to explore the new and enter the new with anticipation of great things in store. We like the new because it is different, it breaks up monotony in our lives, it reminds us of when we were younger. New carries with it an aura of cleanliness and purity, like a new fallen snow in which no track has yet been made. We like the new. "NEW" is the number one advertising slogan of all time by a wide margin.

Sometimes, we like the new too much. In pursuit of what is new and different, we occasionally abandon what is old, proven, and well known. Some leave the old truths of God's word for new ideas of men, and thus the new and different becomes the dangerous and deadly. Some men exchange a wife to whom they are oath-bound for a 'new' wife thinking perhaps that with the new relationship they will become 'new' men. However, there is nothing new in this kind of reasoning; it's still sinful old foolishness.

Whether we are reminded of new cars or new tablets, new friends or new recipes, the New Year holds promise and potential for us all. But to achieve the promise and access the potential is entirely up to us. Simply because the year is new does not necessarily mean that we will become new in it. Just because the car is new doesn't mean that it will take us to wonderful places. Just because the tablet is new doesn't imply that we will fill it with meaningful thoughts. And the newness of this year isn't a guarantee that we will be new persons in it. We all must expend the effort necessary to make the most of the newness of 2012.

The Psalmist prayed for a clean heart and a renewed spirit. Yet he knew as well as we do that when we pray, we must strive to be the fulfillment of that prayer. The Lord taught His disciples to pray for 'daily bread,' and then He taught them to go out and work for a living. We can pray for a new spirit and a new heart, but then we should apply ourselves to answering that prayer by making the effort to be a new person. When we strive together with God to accomplish anything, He hears our prayers and makes up the difference when our own strength and labors reach their limits. Thus it is with the New Year. Let us pray that we will be new, and then stretch ourselves to the utmost to help effect that change.

Many people will be making endless resolutions for the coming year. Of what value are those resolutions and good intentions if no time, energy, or will-power is invested in it? When God's true people resolve to do something, they view that resolution as a vow to God, and they

demonstrate integrity by not excusing themselves from keeping their promises. Would not all of our resolutions for this year carry more weight if we were to view them as vows made to God?

Finally, the New Year gives us an opportunity to examine how far we have come in previous years. In Romans 6:4, we are taught that upon rising from baptism, we walk in 'newness of life.' Has the past year reflected that change? Would not the New Year be the perfect time to repent of the un-confessed sins of 2011 in order to begin 2012 with a clean slate? Will 2012 be a visual demonstration that we are indeed 'new creatures' in Christ? Celebrate this New Year by purposing to live all 365 days of it with a clean heart and a new right spirit.

### **Piano Evolution**

"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Col. 1:16-17).

There was a family of mice who lived all their lives inside of a large piano. From time to time, their piano-world was filled with music from the instrument, filling all the dark spaces with sound and harmony. The mice proclaimed that their musical world was a product of organic evolution, which had occurred over a mysterious 30-billion-year process.

One day, one daring mouse, after having climbed to the top of the piano, found out how the music was made. He returned with great joy to explain it to the other mice. He said there was a great person sitting outside the piano who was pressing on keys. The keys were attached to small hammers which were made to bang against wires. The wires were tightly stretched at graduated lengths which trembled and vibrated when the hammers hit them, and this was how the music was made. All the other mice laughed him to scorn, and said that his whole explanation was nothing more than a myth. Meanwhile, the pianist continued to play.

### **A Moments Wisdom**

- We too often let the material things serve as indicators that we're doing well, even though something inside us tells us that we're not doing our best.
- I think a hero is an ordinary individual who finds strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.
- Patience serves as a protection against wrongs as clothes do against cold. For if you put on more clothes as the cold increases, it will have no power to hurt you. So in like manner you must grow in patience when you meet with great wrongs, and they will then be powerless to vex your mind.