



Sunday, January 3, 2020

WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

Renewal in the New Year

Chantelle and I do a fair amount of shopping at Costco. One of the things that I've noticed at Costco is that every January sees a sale among a reliable group of items: dietary supplements, health food, and workout gear and equipment. Costco bases their in-store stock and the sales they offer on buying trends; the reason that these things go on sale at this time of year is that there is popular demand for them. This popular demand is directly tied to a phenomenon that January and its New Year Holiday creates. The idea is sometimes advertised like this, "New Year, new you."

There is nothing about the change of a calendar year that radically changes anything about us. Still, the New Year is a time of excitement and renewal for humanity. As the sale items indicate though, this renewal often centers around physical changes such as eating healthier food and exercising more.

While it is wise to exercise good stewardship over our physical bodies (as we would over any other blessing God gives us) and while there is "a little" profit in "bodily exercise," it is important to remember that godliness is something different and that it alone "is profitable for all things" (1 Timothy 4:8). The kingdom of God is not about "eating and drinking," and thus food choices have little to do with how we'll spend our eternity; Paul calls us instead to focus on "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). Those trying to focus merely on physical renewal will find that no matter what they do, our "outward man is perishing" each day we live (2 Corinthians 4:16).

The popular theme of renewal isn't a totally useless one to Christians though; in fact, it should be happening in our lives a whole lot more than once a year. To finish Paul's quote from 2 Corinthians 4:16, "Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."

Being renewed inwardly is a daily process of changing our thoughts and behaviors. It is a transformation of our mind that sees us becoming less like we were before we met Jesus and more like Jesus Himself. Consider the following readings which touch on "renewal":

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

"But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:20-24).

"Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Colossians 3:9-10).

As you can see, renewal is something that Christians are called to do, not just once a year, but each day.

As you celebrate the New Year, feel free to make resolutions that see you taking better care of your body. However, make sure that you are even more resolved to the daily task of inward renewal, of drawing closer to God by becoming more and more like Jesus Christ.

