

# STARTING OVER

By Bill Irby

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The New Year is well under way. Have you noticed that this new one is much like the old one? But we do like our conventions and one of them is that the beginning of a new year means something. It is for one thing, a place for starting over.

The Law of Moses contained a number of yearly observances. One, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), has in it an element of the idea of starting over. In the New Covenant this concept is fully developed. John said, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7-9 KJV).

In the old law the Day of Atonement and other observances looked forward to the work of Christ that would provide forgiveness. In the new law we look back to the Cross for that forgiveness in Jesus' blood.

A Christian today gets to start over fresh, cleansed from his sin. This occurs when that Christian confesses and repents of his sins. In this way we get to start over every day. Still, the New Year is a better time that most to contemplate our continual need to start over.

Paul also presented this principle. He said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14 KJV). Of all the New Testament cast, Paul was the man most in need of this "starting over" concept. We all know his history. He was

a Pharisee and a persecutor of the church. He helped those who killed the preacher Stephen. He was fervent in his work against Christ. But he started over. So may we.

The practical side of this principle is easy to see. That new diet has to start somewhere, so I'll start over. That new exercise routine needs to be started over. A new financial plan has to be begun before it can work. You can think of many things to add to this list.

But, of course, the main and most significant application of the principle is in our spiritual lives. We all know what we need to do. We know we cannot be exactly as Jesus was, but to be Christ-like is our goal. Since every human being is unique, we will each strive toward this goal in our own way. But there will be some commonality to the task. We will all heed the teachings of the Lord and His inspired writers. We will all worship Him as He directed (John 4:24, 2 Timothy 1:13). And we will all grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

This last thing is a good place to begin to start over: spiritual growth. The seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:11, 1 Peter 1:22-25). We have to make sure it is in the right place---our hearts. And we must be sure to water and work that planted seed.

We can begin to grow spiritually again by studying harder and more efficiently. We grow when we pray often and fervently. We grow when we serve others. Why not let this New Year (for it has only just started itself) be the time that you avail yourself of the blessing of starting over.