

Starting Over

Last week, I spent a lot of time working feverishly in my classroom, trying desperately to get ready for another school year. Now the new school year has begun with classes starting this past Monday. One of the greatest things about being a teacher is being able to start over from scratch and try to improve from year to year. The past is just that—PAST—and there is truly not anything that can be done about it. All one can do is learn from the past, put it behind, and strive to be a better teacher. We learn from classes during the summer and hear from speakers at our inservice meetings just how to do that.

Our relationship to God and our spiritual life is a lot like that. God has given us chance after chance to start over and get our life right. There are lots of things we did wrong in the past and we need to learn from them, changing our lives to be more acceptable to God. Paul likens it to a death and a birth. The old, sinful person that we were is crucified (maybe “sacrificed” is a better word) and a new sinless baby is born. That new child is the old man’s chance to get life right this time.

This is one of many things Paul says about that rebirth—that “starting over”—from **Romans 6:4**:

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

And from **Colossians 3:9-10**:

“...you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

In the reference from Colossians 3 above, Paul tells his readers to get rid of the things from the past – things like sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language and falsehood. Learn from them and put them behind. He then says, in essence, “Start over!”— filling our new life in Christ with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love.

No matter where we are in our relationship with God, he promises forgiveness for our past and promise for the future. Anyone who says “I’m such a terrible person, God can NEVER forgive me” doesn’t know the God I worship and adore. **2 Corinthians 5:17** tells us that **“if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”** And much like Paul, we should be about the business of **“forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, (we should) press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called (us) heavenward in Christ**

Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14) If that means starting over each and every day, that is exactly what we should do.