

## **Forgive, With Thanks!**

Have you made your New Years Resolution yet?  
Do you intend to make any?  
Do you intend to keep them?  
What has been your success rate?

Today's reading from Colossians actually makes a good resolution, a directional answer to our needs.

You have been chosen! This is God's action, not our own, and this action provides us with this new status. Do you recognize what this means? Do you realize that God loves you? Do you accept that God is intimately involved in your life and sent His Son for you and His Spirit for you? If you do recognize and accept this, indeed if I do, the next question is the big one! How do we respond to this love?

We could "clothe ourselves in compassion for others". We could reach out to others in "kindliness and gentleness". We could be "humble" in all things and "patient beyond measure". Not just at breakfast once a month or at sandwich once a week but do it 24/7. These are traits that we could practice all the time during the new year.2007. We could wear our new "clothes" all through 2007!

We have been forgiven! God takes us by the hand and says: "My beloved, forget your past and walk with me." Were we deserving of this grace and mercy or has it become the greatest gift of your life? With a New Year dawning we should resolve to carry his loving forgiveness out into the world. Not just the world, out into OUR OWN world to those who have hurt and wronged us. Can you find it in your heart to set aside those hurts, forget you have been wronged and forgive them regardless of how undeserving they may seem to be? If God forgave you, you should forgive others? Right? Yes, but we cannot do it alone. We can only forgive in Christ. In Christ we can forgive and forget, in Him we find the strength. I believe that doing this is the most healthy thing one can do! Make the practice of forgiveness you priority resolution of 2007.

Does "peace" rule in you heart? When turmoil and stress attempt to take charge of your life, do you turn to Christ? When anxiety, fear, discontentment threaten to overwhelm you, do you allow Christ to take control or do you want to keep control? You can look through an argument, discord or a disagreement to see and accept that you are a member of the Body of Christ, one in Spirit and one in love with all those around you. Let the peace of Christ into your heart, give the control to him and you will give thanks for the peace.

We look to the New Year as an opportunity to start over. Paul is telling us that this is truly possible in Christ. We do not need to carry the baggage of past wrongs, hurts or hang-ups with us into the New Year. We are forgiven by the love of Christ. And because we are forgiven, we are empowered to forgive those who have hurt us. We can "clothe (ourselves) with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience"

because God has chosen us to be Christ to our world. And no matter how dark the world may seem, no matter how much war and conflict we encounter, or despair and hopelessness we perceive, the Peace of Christ will rule our hearts. Love, peace, joy and hope are what the New Year has in store – Praise God!