

# *New Beginnings*

St. Paul always seemed to be ready to give others the second chance. In Ephesians 4, Paul once again speaks of “putting away your old self.” This “New Self Theology” is very appealing to those of us who keep messing up our old selves—who keep missing the mark, through sin. It’s like another way of saying, “Be baptized once more.”

Paul’s declaration is so encouraging and refreshing:

*“...be renewed in the spirit of minds, and put on the new self, created in God’s way...”*

And how does one become “renewed in spirit of minds”? A few years ago, while struggling with my conscience over some fool thing I had done, I revisited a Chinese proverb I had stuffed away in my collections of quotations: “The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time is today!”

I had read this quote many times before, but for some reason I was ready to hear it this time. It made sense to me like Paul saying “be renewed!” You see, now, as I wake up every morning and say to myself, “the next best time to plant that tree is today,” God frees me up to the possibility of new beginnings, right now; forget what may have been a struggle from yesterday, or a worry that may try to mist over me that day. God and I are planting new life right now! IT IS a new beginning!

Jesus was in the “new beginnings business” Himself, in so many ways. Some people He could get to, and others never did seem to get it. Funny how it always seemed to be the poor and lame, the blind and broken ones who took Jesus’ new beginnings theme to heart. Jesus tried it on the Pharisees often, but they were too caught up in being right—and Jesus being wrong—that they never got the message.

But the leper did. The blind man did. The woman at the well did. Paul called it being “renewed in spirit and mind;” I think Jesus just would have called it BEING REAL. Real followers listened to His words. They believed Him when He said He loved them, when He told them of a Father who loved them, and of a Spirit who was there to guide and protect them.

My understanding is that REAL LOVE to Jesus means having the Faith that it will all turn out all right, no matter how the shadows are cast before you. He is the Light of the world that floods the shadows with bright goodness. He showed us this on His way to the cross—never complaining, always instructing, leaving hints of what was going to happen so the Apostles were not left with pure mystery, but with a roadmap of where He wanted them to go.

When He was crucified, His followers saw anything but new beginnings. They thought the party was over—time to clean up and go back home, emptyhanded. But Jesus had another plan: Surprise them with a new beginning on Easter Sunday that would not only bring JOY of the moment, but joy everlasting in His pathway to everlasting life with Him in Heaven. All He asked was that they “be renewed in HIM”—to do as Paul had prescribed, to “put on the new self” each time they fell short.

For those of us who needed a little boost in finding this new self, He cured, He healed, He enlivened with His teachings. In you and me, He cured our leprosy, brought back sight and hearing—even raised us from our deadness. These were not merely miracles of old, but are present-day happenings. Jesus is the God of the NOW-moment. He draws these miracles out from the interactions between you and me, every day.

You see, this **new self** is in you and me every time we rise and say, “the second best time (to plant that tree) is today!” I believe that THIS is the new beginning in us that Jesus was hoping for all a long...to see that we can live a life of freedom in Him by putting on that NEW SELF at every moment. His miracles brought (and bring) new life in the moment. NOW!

We too are full of new beginnings every time we choose the way of Christ: forgiving, hoping, loving, believing, trying, discovering...Jesus is not a WAS, He is an **IS**, living through each of our lives in miracles alive today, mighty and small, but always born of REAL LOVE from a Savior who believes that His new beginnings are as constant as sunlight. And He is right. They are free to anyone who can recognize that all it takes is to believe in a “New Self Theology,” ready to be the miracle in real time for you and me—if we only accept Jesus’ offer to breathe in each new beginning.

Are you ready for a new beginning? It’s waiting for you.

by Rich Melcher