



THE GENERAL'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE FOR 2023 – PRINT VERSION

Dear Friends,

A New Year always holds great potential and most of us will spend some time thinking about the uncharted landscape ahead. We ponder New Year resolutions, we consider 'beginning again' – a new start or a clean page. In some instances, there are even things we want to leave behind and something rises within us suggesting that a refocused human effort will make a difference. Each year the voices come: 'clean up your act'; 'you can do better'; 'get a grip'; 'don't be so disorganised'; 'focus on the right things'. It isn't always easy to get off to a good start!

As I've been thinking of all that effort and trying harder, I am reminded of Old Testament narratives of people constantly making gigantic efforts to secure a right relationship with God. Like them, we try harder, we strive and we practise our religion, hoping all will be well.

If this sounds like you and this is how you are feeling as you welcome 2023, I have some good news which is linked to how we start this New Year and how we do things right.

I want to introduce you to the '**Once and for all God**' (Romans 6:10: 'The death he died, he died to sin **once for all**; but the life he lives, he lives to God'). For some it might be a new perspective but, it has history. God's provision for us began with a new covenant commencing with the cross. This is a focus on what God has done for us and not on our striving and effort. It is a new beginning that is birthed in the dynamic of personal surrender.

So, step into this New Year with confidence, not that which comes from your human effort but rather from walking with the 'once and for all God' who says, 'my grace is sufficient for you'.

Hebrews 9:28 states: 'Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many.' That includes us. John 1:29 reads: 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' That is my sin and your sin.

In the truth that Christ died once and for all, there is also the truth that he lives, and because he lives we can also live. Walking with God daily, let us confront the temporal and spiritual in such a way that no matter what comes, the truth of God's action on our behalf remains rock solid. That means, whatever comes – if economies fail, if health becomes challenging, if our plans are disrupted, and even if what we fear most becomes a reality – **we are safe in his hands, fully aware of his provision.**

In the arena of surrender there hangs a banner, reading: 'God is with us and he is faithful'. On that basis we can approach every day of this new year as 'more than conquerors' (Romans 8:37), and in the knowledge that Christ has 'overcome the world' (John 16:33), because his grace is sufficient and he is faithful.

Romans 5:8 encapsulates this: 'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' It is done! For once and for all time... and that changes everything.

May God richly bless you throughout 2023.

Brian Peddle
General