

*January 1*

## MORE OF THE SAME

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today  
and forever. Hebrews 13:8

Last night in New York City's Times Square, the clock struck midnight, the crowd cheered, the confetti flew, and a new year began. Today city workers are busy cleaning up the celebration's debris. Tomorrow people, hurrying to their places of employment, will throng the sidewalks. And everything will be the same.

More of the same—that's what life seems to be for many of us. Though some may have new experiences and excitement this new year, life for many of us will be one day strung behind the other with the same tasks hovering before our eyes and the same troubles settling on our shoulders. It doesn't make much difference what number we write for the year.

Thank God one thing never changes. Would we want a Lord who changes his mind and issues a recall for promises he made yesterday? A Lord who forgets his full payment for all our sins and now demands that we cover sin's debt? A Lord who capriciously closes the door to heaven he once opened with his resurrection?

More of the same! That's what we need and that's what we have in the Savior Jesus, who is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Lord Jesus, fill our lives each day of this  
new year with more of your unchanging  
love. Amen.



*January 2*

## A NEW YEAR BUT THE SAME PARDON

I will forgive their wickedness and will  
remember their sins no more. Jeremiah 31:34

What can you do with that water stain on the kitchen ceiling? Try covering it with ordinary paint, but it still bleeds through. Buy the special paint made to cover such stains, but you still see its faint outline each time you look at the ceiling.

Sometimes we act as if God deals the same way with our sins. As if Jesus merely covered them over and yet they're still there. Notice what the gracious Lord said. He does more than cover our sins—he removes them. He doesn't even remember our sins. Our sins are gone as if they never existed. All because he sent his Son to pay for them on Calvary's cross.

Thank God we didn't have to enter the new year with the stains of last year's sins upon us. They're totally gone—blotted out completely by the precious blood of the Savior. And the sins of this new year? There will be plenty of them. Old familiar ones that we fight against and yet fall back into. New ones that we stumble into because they sneak up on us. What shall we do, what can we do, with all their wretched stains?

The same thing we did last year. Bring them with tears of repentance to God, and thank him each day of this new year for forgiving our sins and remembering them no more.

Thank you, Lord, for your forgiveness that  
remains new for us each day. Amen.



*January 3*



## A NEW YEAR BUT THE SAME PEACE

The LORD blesses his people with peace.  
Psalm 29:11

Pixie, our toy fox terrier, was so high strung that she seldom relaxed. Perhaps it was her size that made everything seem like a threat to her. Only when she was in front of the fireplace would her ears finally go down and her legs stretch out.

We also know something about threats and stress. We've carried burdens from the old year into the new. And those burdens seem to pick up more weight day by day. And who knows what new problems will drop down on our shoulders tomorrow? It's enough to make us keep our ears up and never relax, to run around and "bark" in anxiety. We are so small compared to what we have to live with and what looms before us.

What's the solution? Where can we find release from our fears and relaxation under our burdens? There's only one place—one person—the Lord. He who prepared in Jesus the perfect peace we need for our souls will also provide what we need for our daily lives. With eyes on such a loving Lord, we can go forward even though the steps are painful. We can smile even in the midst of tears. When hearts of faith lie down before God's promises, the result is always peace.

Lord, fasten our hearts on your gracious  
promises and fill our lives with peace. Amen.



*January 4*

## A NEW YEAR BUT THE SAME POWER

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.  
Ephesians 6:10

Those nails just wouldn't budge. Finally, I reached for the pinch bar, that three-foot-long metal rod with a claw on the end, and wrenched the nails one by one out of the board. Power when I needed it, that's what that pinch bar gave me.

None of us is a stranger to temptation. Each of us has his own areas of weakness that the sly devil explores and the sinful world exploits. And the evil hearts within us never sleep or give up the struggle. Know what I'm talking about? How long would the list be if we were to catalog the soft spots where temptations sink in so readily? How many times have we been pinned to the mat of sin by the old evil foe instead of winning the match?

Will it get any better this new year? Will our struggle against sin be more successful? Not if we use only the puny hammer of our own efforts. More power is needed. And the Lord Jesus offers us just that. "[He] appeared . . . to destroy the devil's work," Scripture tells us (1 John 3:8). Not only has God's Son paid for our sins, but he has also broken Satan's stranglehold on us. When Satan is successful in our lives, it's not because Christ's power has failed. Rather it's because our hold on his pinch bar isn't as firm as it should be.

Lord, tighten our grip on your Word  
through which you give our faith your  
mighty power. Amen.



*January 5*

## A NEW YEAR BUT THE SAME PROMISE

[I will] take you to be with me that you also  
may be where I am. John 14:3

“Are we there yet?” “How much longer?” Five minutes down the road and the kids in the backseat start asking these questions.

So do we. In fact, as one year runs into another, these questions come up with increasing frequency. How many new years do we have left? How many days in this new year will there be for us? We leave the answers to those questions in the Lord’s hands. He knows much better than we what the measure of our days should be.

We do know, though, where we are going. The Lord himself has told us. Jesus said it was to be where he would be. We call the place heaven, but we don’t know its location. We know something about that place, though we, who are so used to this vale of tears, have a hard time imagining an existence totally free from temptation, tears, and troubles. Best of all, heaven will mean being with Jesus.

And we know how to get there. Jesus has answered that question so clearly for us. The only way is through his blood that has cleansed us from all sin and his righteousness that clothes us for heaven. That’s his promise, and it holds true into a new year and into all eternity.

Lord Jesus, keep us ready for heaven  
by covering us with your blood and  
righteousness. Amen.



*January 6*

## A NEW YEAR BUT THE SAME STAR

We saw his star in the east and have come to  
worship him. Matthew 2:2

We don't know much about the Magi. Scripture doesn't reveal from what country they came, how many they were, what occupations or names they had. What we need to know about them, though, the biblical account has recorded. They were led by some mysterious star—"his" star—right to Jesus' side. And when the Magi saw their infant Savior, they knew what to do. They knelt down and worshiped him.

The Magi were the first in a long line of Gentiles brought to the Savior, a line that by God's grace includes us also. They were led by a star. Our star is even better. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path," the psalmist wrote (119:105), and we heartily agree. Wherever we open that Word, we see the Savior. All of its teachings revolve around its central message of God's Son coming into the world to pay for sin and prepare peace again with our Maker. Guided by that star, we have knelt at Jesus' baby bed and cruel cross. We have rejoiced in his resurrection and received the promise of his return. "We have seen his star," we say with the Magi, not in the east but, better still, in his Word.

Now the Lord has given us a new year in which to be guided by his Word to our Savior. Modern Magi know where their eyes belong—on God's wondrous star.

Help us to live in your Holy Word, Lord, and to  
see our Savior there. Amen.

