

One's "eyes" automatically "[l]ift up...[t]o the mountains" and -- beyond. (v.1) Normally, it is not easy to look up. We'd much rather follow the lead of the world & look down -- at ourselves. From little on -- we *do* this.

"I can do it myself," pouts the little child whose shoe you're trying to tie.

"Leave me alone," responds the teenager to whom you are trying to give advice.

"I'll let you know, when I need your help," the 50 year-old gruffly says.

"That's not the way we do it," objects the senior citizen when changes are proposed.

Human beings tend to look down at themselves & all too often, we Christians tend to follow their lead.

Now listen to the Psalmist. He did not write, "My help comes from ME." It's, "My help comes from the *LORD*." (v.2) Forget this & we are in trouble. Who are we that we can "help" ourselves? How strong are we & How foolproof our plans? How often this past year didn't we fret & even fail because we looked in the wrong direction? How cautious & concerned aren't we already about the 'new' year because we look down at insufficient mortals like ourselves instead of up at an almighty GOD? Want to change YEARS -- THE RIGHT WAY? Then look up -- at GOD, "the Maker of heaven and earth." (v.2). He surely can & *will* take care of us. We can trust Him - - implicitly, confidently, totally.

2.) Look back, then ahead. CHANGING YEARS involve also a backward look. Were there no joys in 2020?

No moments of meaningful love shared with spouse or children?

No proper pride in the achievements & advancements of family members?

No successes at school or in our jobs?

No realization of some goal or life-long dream?

No lighter moments on the lake or at the ballgame?

Let's not forget from whom such blessings flowed & how easily He can *grant* them also in the 'new' year, if they should be for our good & His glory.

Does the backward look involve something painful?

Were there times when we blew it -- in our dealings with others, perhaps even with those closest to us?

Times when we tried so hard & yet fell right back into sin's 'old' ruts & felt so bad afterwards?

Times when people we cared for were hurting or in the hospital & we couldn't visit them?

Times when our actions were limited by fear or pain?

Times when our daily routine taxed our nerves & caused sleepless nights?

Times when you & I couldn't escape our down feelings or grief?

Where are some of those problems now? Many are gone, lifted by the loving hand of an almighty GOD. Some may still be with us, yet we made it through the year in spite of them. A gracious GOD helped us bear them & even to grow in patience & faith because of them. Will the LORD forsake us in the year ahead? Of course not!

We don't know what *MIGHT* happen to us or to...the little grand-child that has our heart's affection, a son or a daughter which reminds us of ourselves, a loved one who fails to recognize us anymore...will they still be here when the next year rolls around? We don't know. Nor do we need to know. "The essence of tragedy," someone wrote, "is to know -- the end." That may be true unless you are reading the book of Revelation whose "end" is... heavenly! Friends, it's enough for us to know, not what the 'new' year *holds*, but who *holds* the 'new' year. It is the LORD "who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32), thus removing our guilt & wiping out Satan's claim on our souls -- *He will fill 2021 with what is good for us.*

A young artist won an award for a painting of unusual merit. On receiving the prize, he remarked to a friend, "That really isn't my best painting." "Oh?" replied the friend somewhat surprised. "Then why didn't you exhibit your best?" With a smile, the artist replied, "Because my *best* painting is yet to be done."

If only you & I could develop the same attitude toward our growth in Christian faith & life! With GOD's "help," the noblest virtues, the strongest faith, the greatest victories over our sinful self are yet to come. The Psalmist knew by looking ahead his "*best* painting was yet to be done." Do we share the same conviction?

The LORD's love & forgiveness & concern do not change with the calendar. When we look at Him, CHANGING YEARS is easy!

Because -- even though "change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, *will abide* with you & me!" (C. W. 588:2) Amen.

Psalm 121:1-2, "CHANGING YEARS...THE RIGHT WAY!"
(New Year's Eve) '20

Heavenly Father, grant us to the faith that drives out fear so that we may find peace and strength in the midst of trouble as we await the deliverance of a powerful and forgiving God. In Jesus' Name, we ask it. Amen.

Dear Friends & Followers of Jesus Christ,

A man got a flat tire outside of a mental institution. As he began to change the tire, he sees a man in a window watching him from the asylum. Nervous -- as he changes the tire, he drops the lug nuts down the sewer drain. Now he is stuck on what to do. So he paces back & forth. The patient in the window yells down at the man. "Hey!...hey! Up here! Take one lug nut off each tire, then each tire will have three & you can get into town & replace them. The man says, "Say, that's brilliant! What are you doing in a place like this?" The patient says, "I'm crazy, not stupid!"

Obviously, changing a tire can be difficult. But CHANGING YEARS is easy, isn't it? All we have to do is watch the dropping of the lighted ball in Times Square, N.Y., sing, "Auld Lang Syne," blow a party horn & shout, "Happy New Year!" And then don't forget to change the calendar & write 2021 -- the next few days. What's so hard about that?

For most of us, however, changing years is not quite that simple. It is not easy to forget about parts of the past year: COVID cases & deaths, restrictions & closings, social unrest & violence. Situations we would just as soon forget about, but erasing them is not so easy. Nor is stepping off into the dark unknown of a 'new' year -- a light matter. Realizing this, we should welcome the Psalmist's advice about: "CHANGING YEARS...THE RIGHT WAY!"

1.) Look up, not down. Just south of Yellowstone National Park is the famed Jackson Hole area of Wyoming with the magnificent range of mountains known as the "Grand Tetons." Nestled at the foot of these mighty peaks in a flower-bedecked meadow is a little log cabin church known as the "Chapel of the Transfiguration." When a visitor steps inside, he/she discovers the reason for its name. For in the back wall of the church above the altar is a huge plate-glass window, which affords all worshippers a glorious view of the spectacular "Tetons."