



January 2008

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January 1; At last it has come. The Peach Drop, Times Square, New York, Black Eye Peas, Collard Greens and all of the other traditions that mark a New Year. It is the beginning of a New Year. The calendar reminds and affirms this for us. It is indicated in the rush we engage as we plan parties, worship services and execute those final pieces of business making certain we get those things into the old year before time runs out. Change is accorded to a New Year. We can now clear the slate. We can wipe off the encumbrances of the old

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PASTOR'S

Perspective

year and boldly approach the duties of the New Year. Somehow, there is so much difference found between two dates, December 31 and January 1.

Yet there are many things that move unchanged giving no respect to or regard for a device like the calendar or arrangements such as contracts or leases. There is the habit pattern of the individual life. Changes in life, you know, are noted not by things like a calendar, even though they may appear on the calendar. Changes to something as grand as life often come from beyond the person themselves. In many instances these changes are divinely ordered and thus there is nothing we can do about them. These changes make for shifts in values or the basic rearrangement of purposes. There are desires of the heart or moods of the spirit that may flow continuously for us whatever the calendar indicates. The lonely heart, the joyful spirit, the churning anxiety may remain unrelieved, though the days come and go without end. But this is, after all, why we hold to God's 'Unchanging Hand' throughout the year! He and His all keeping power alone are able to keep us even in the face of life's shifting dynamics and changes.

Anthony M. Alford, Sr., Pastor

In reality though, if embraced appropriately this will be a *New Year*. Not another year but a New Year, I mind you. It can mark the end of relationships of many years' embrace. It could mean the first encounter with stark tragedy or radical illness or the first drink from the cup of bitterness. But it can also mean the first encounter with new joy or new birth. It can bring the great discovery of the riches of another human heart or the revelation of the secret beauty of one's own heart finally surfacing and bursting forth with exuberance. It may mean the beginning of a new kind of living because of marriage, of graduation or for many youth, their first job. More than all of this, hopefully and gleefully, it will come to mean a new encounter with God. A grand discovery of the real essence of life, the real meaning of love, the real power of forgiveness, the real benefit of prayer or the real assurance of grace at work in your life. Whatever comes your way this year, make of it a new experience, a new opportunity for growth and a new awareness of the power that really keeps the sail of life adrift. Keep your life open for the ever present surprise that God always desires to endow your life with. Happy New Year!