

Living in the Land of Beginning Again

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In the early 20th century, Louisa Fletcher wrote a poem entitled "The Land of Beginning Again." Since then, others have added to it and even made it into songs. One version was sung by Bing Crosby in *The Bells of Saint Mary*. Now in public domain, Louisa's original poem is as follows.

I wish that there were some wonderful place
In the Land of Beginning Again
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door
And never put on again.

I wish we could come on it all unaware
Like the hunter who finds a lost trail
And I wish that the one whom our blindness had done
The greatest injustice of all
Could be there at the gates like an old friend that waits
For the comrade he's gladdest to hail.

We would find all the things we intended to do
But forgot, and remembered too late.
Little praises unspoken, little promises broken,
And all the thousand and one
Little duties neglected that might have perfected
The day for one less fortunate.

It wouldn't be possible not to be kind
In the Land of Beginning Again.
And the ones we misjudged
And the ones whom we grudged
Their moments of victory here,
Would find in the grasp of our loving hand-clasp
More than penitent lips could explain.

For what had been hardest we'd know had been best
And what had seemed loss would be gain
For there isn't a sting that will not take a wing
When we've faced it and laughed it away.
And I think that the laughter is most what we're after
In the Land of Beginning Again.

So I wish that there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches,

And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door
And never put on again.

Most of us at some point in our lives share Louisa's sentiment. We would like to go "where all our mistakes and all our heartaches and all of our poor selfish grief could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door and never put on again." We agree with Neal Morse whose lyrics to his song, *The Land of Beginning Again* include, "I wish there was a way to start again, to wake up among friends in the land of beginning again and I love my brother more than my own life and no one feels mean. All things are new. Behold, the slate is clean."

It is uncertain whether the authors of the songs or poems about the land of beginning again knew they were talking about spiritual truths, but they were.

Decisions of our past, both good and bad, have a bearing on where we are today. We may be pleased with where we are or wish things were radically different. There may be scores of things that we wish we could change about our past.

Sometimes it is circumstances beyond our control that have put us in a place of sorrow, heartache or persecution. Perhaps the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, a natural disaster, ill health or any other sad events in our lives have been ever too present.

For a Christian, the desire to begin again is a reality. When we come face to face with sin in our lives, we wish we could begin again. In Christ, we can. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us* (Psalm 103:12 NIV). True repentance is more than regret. It is seeing ourselves as God sees us - sinners in need of salvation. His love in sending Christ to bear those sins on His cross makes it possible for us to start life anew. Once we repent of our sins, because of Jesus, our slate is clean. Now God sees His Son in us. Our sinfulness has been replaced with His righteousness. And the promise of eternity is that when we enter the gates of heaven, we will drop all of our sorrows at the door and never put them on again.

There is, however, the challenge of living day by day. Between the time we accept the gift of salvation through Christ and we go to heaven where there is no sin present, we must still live in a world full of sin. The Christian life is hard. Satan delights in attacking believers and tempting them in our most vulnerable points.

We must remember, then, because of Christ, we truly live in the land of beginning again.

I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of God in the land of the living (Psalm 27:13). God's promises are true. In the good times and the bad times, trust in the God who gives us a chance to begin again.

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