



THE CROSS *and* CROWN

"No Cross, No Crown"

a publication of Highway Mission Tabernacle and Resurrection Life Church, Philadelphia, PA

Edition XCVII | December 29, 2024 copyright ©2024, Highway Mission Tabernacle

"Brothers and sisters, pray for us." I Thessalonians 5:25



When I asked my mother why she insisted on washing all the dirty clothes and every dirty dish in the house on New Year's Eve, she told me that, if there were dirty clothes and dishes in the house on New Year's Day, there would be dirty clothes and dishes in the house all year long. I couldn't really get my head around that: Wouldn't there be dirty clothes and dishes in the house either way, just by nature of the fact that we're constantly using them and getting them dirty? Looking back on this tradition as an adult, however, I can appreciate the value of having a clean slate and starting the new year fresh.

When God gave Israel the Passover, he told Moses and Aaron, "This month is to be for you the first month of your year." (Exodus 12:2) He was establishing a clear point of separation between their old lives as slaves of Egypt and their new lives as servants of God. We find this clear demarcation in our Christian walks as well, as Paul wrote, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (II Corinthians 5:17)

Salvation marks the beginning of our new year and new life;— our liberation from the bondage of sin. However, it is not the last of the new beginnings in our lives. Even as Christians, we sometimes have to hit the reset button, as David did, after he sinned with Bathsheba, and as Peter did, after his three denials of Jesus. The wonderful thing is that God does not hold our past against us! He always sets that clear demarcation. "I will forgive their wickedness," he promises, "and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12)

I'm a firm believer in new year's resolutions, although I don't make them myself. We can resolve to change our course at any time, but the start of a new year, in particular, gives us a great opportunity to draw that line in the sand and commit ourselves to making a break with our past. As we look forward to a new year, let's agree to take some time to talk things over with God, and ask him where he'd like us to make refinements. This is the start of something new! Let's make the most of it, for God's glory.

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Isaiah 61:1,2)

Brothers and Sisters, Pray for Us!

We have much to be thankful for as we close out this year, and much to trust God for as we await the new year. Thank you for agreeing with us for:

- those in our city with inadequate heat and housing for this cold weather,
- more God's his Spirit, wisdom and direction,
- more people called and eager to minister in the church and the academy, and
- ministry planning and execution in the new year.

We're praying with you!

If you're on our mailing list*, you're on our prayer list! If there's anything specific that we can join with you in praying for, please let us know. (We will only publish your requests in this newsletter with your permission.)

Whether it's to share a prayer need, a praise report or a word of greeting or encouragement, please keep in touch. Hearing from you encourages us more than you know.

✉	PO Box 15191 Philadelphia, PA 19130
🌐	17 th & Tioga Streets (3501 N 17 th Street) Philadelphia, PA 19140
📞	Church/Academy Office: (215) 226-1000
💻	CrossAndCrown@Highway.AG

* **Important:** If you'd rather not be on our mailing list, we won't be offended! Just call or write us, and we'll remove you. (We'll still keep you on our prayer list!)

If you'd rather receive this letter via e-mail, please let us know, or subscribe to it at crossandcrown.online/subscribe !

Did You Know?

In 1904, Albert Ochs, the owner of the *New York Times*, threw an all-day celebration in the newly renamed Times Square, to ring in the new year. The celebration culminated with the launching of fireworks from the base of the building, a spectacle which the paper described as a torch that lit the way to 1905. In 1907, after fireworks were banned in New York City, Ochs arranged to have a ball drop from the top of the building to usher in the year 1908, and a new tradition was born.

See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare.

(Isaiah 42:9)



Highway Mission Tabernacle ♦ Resurrection Life Church ♦ PO Box 15191 Philadelphia, PA 19130
Welcome@ResLife.AG ♦ Church: (215) 226-1000 ♦ Otis: (215) 266-5976
HighwayTabernacle.org ♦ ResLife.AG ♦ Sunday services at Noon: ResLife.stream

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