

Cornerstone Community Church: FINISH STRONG
Wally Gonzalez · 12/29/2024 · Isaiah 43:18-19

The turning of the calendar to a new year often fills us with a sense of hope and possibility. It's a chance to reflect on the past and prepare for what lies ahead. However, many of us carry the weight of past mistakes, regrets, or disappointments that hold us back from fully stepping into the new opportunities God has prepared for us.

The Bible reminds us that God is always at work, bringing renewal and transformation into our lives.

Isaiah 43:18-19, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. ¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

- God calls His people to forget the former things and look forward to the new things He is doing.
- Just as the Israelites needed to trust in God's promise of deliverance, we, too, must trust Him to lead us into a brighter future.

This message challenges us to release the past, embrace God's work, and walk forward in faith, trusting His perfect plan.

1. Release the Past

What kind of a year has 2024 been for you? ...Where would you place it on a scale of 1 – 10?

- **Maybe 2024 was a 8 or 9 out of 10 – in other words, it was a really good year.**
 - Good year ..success in your business/work/school/ family/relationships/
- **Maybe would give it a 5**
 - It was just another year, pretty much the same as any other year?
 - Nothing very exciting happened

Getting up/going to work/coming home/going to bed

- **Maybe 2024 deserves only 2 out of 10.**
 - Everything that could go wrong did go wrong.
 - Tragedy/sickness/loss of friends
 - Marriage problems / the kids were just impossible

As I reflect on Isaiah 43:18-19 it reminds me...

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- **Stop Dwelling on What Cannot Be Changed:** Holding onto past failures or regrets can paralyze us spiritually and emotionally. God calls us to leave behind the old and focus on the new. Dwelling on past hurts can make us miss out on the blessings He has prepared.
- **God's Forgiveness Gives Freedom:**

2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here!

- No matter what we've done or where we've been, **God's grace offers us a clean slate.**
- His mercies are new every morning

Lamentations 3:22-23, Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

- so we can start afresh each day.

Illustration: Share the story of Peter, who denied Jesus three times but was later restored and empowered to lead the early church. This demonstrates how God's forgiveness and renewal can transform lives.

2. Embrace God's New Work

- **Recognizing the New Thing God is Doing:** God's work may not always be immediately apparent.

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- challenges us to perceive the new things God is springing forth in our lives.
- This requires spiritual sensitivity and trust in His timing.
- **Practical Steps to Embrace Change:**
 - Spend time in prayer and scripture to discern God's direction.
 - Create space in your life for God's plans by letting go of distractions or old habits that hinder growth.

Illustration: The Israelites in the wilderness struggled to trust God as they journeyed to the Promised Land. Yet God was doing something new by providing manna and guiding them daily, demonstrating His faithfulness.

3. Walk in Faith

- **Faith Requires Action:** Embracing a fresh start means stepping out even when the future seems uncertain. **Hebrews 11:1, Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.**
- **Trust in God's Promises:** God's plans are always for our good
Jeremiah 29:11, For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
 - Trusting Him allows us to move forward with confidence, knowing He is with us every step of the way.

Illustration: Share the example of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. God made a way where there was none, proving that trusting Him leads to miraculous breakthroughs.

Conclusion

As we step into this New Year, God is inviting us to experience His renewal. Let us release the burdens of the past and walk forward with hope, knowing that His plans are good and His mercies are new every morning. Just as He promised the Israelites, He is doing a new thing in our lives, and we must open our hearts to receive it.

Remember, every day with God is an opportunity for a fresh start. Through His grace, we are empowered to live boldly, faithfully, and purposefully in His will. As you leave here today, commit to seeking God's guidance, trusting His promises, and stepping into the new things He has prepared for you this year. Let this year be one of transformation, renewal, and abundant faith in the God who makes all things new.