

Remnant Life Church

January 4, 2015

## “Starting Well”

Isaiah 43:14-19; 44:21-22

- There are two things that everyone does this time of year
  - We look back at the year that was
  - And we look forward to the year to come
- Hopefully we do this in a way that is intended to help us grow
  - We should look back to recall the good things of the past 12 months
  - We should look back to identify those things that we need to change or perhaps not repeat
- Many people do not look at it that way
  - They focus on those things that did not happen instead of those things that did
  - They fixate on the negative instead of the positive
  - The failures instead of the successes that God gave by His Hand
- As Christians, we must guard against this with everything that we are

*Know this truth:* satan wants you to focus on your past; but God, through the person of Jesus Christ, wants you to focus on your future!

### Isaiah

- Prophesied from approximately 740-685 BCE
- Writing at a time when the nations of Judah and Israel were enduring God's punished for their sins but still not repenting
  - From 1051 to 931 - 120 years under Saul, David, and Solomon
    - The 12 tribes are divided – **I Kings 12-14**
      - 10 northern tribes of Israel (led by Jeroboam) with its capital in Samaria
      - 2 tribes of the southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin with Jerusalem as its capital led by Rehoboam.
      - From 931 to 722 (Syrians) there were 19 Kings in Israel (the 10 northern tribes)
      - From 931 to 586 (Babylon) there were 20 Kings of Judah (2 southern tribes)
    - Of those 39 kings only 8 were characterized as good or followers of God (worshipping only God; tearing down idols)
      - All 8 of them were kings of Judah; the southern kingdom
      - Given 136 more years of freedom
- Isaiah is writing during the difficult times of 4 (possibly 5) of those kings who both followed God and denied Him
- The struggles of the people are evident but God continues to speak words of hope and encouragement to them
  - Punishment and consequences of sin is not abandonment by God

- Repentance is always God's desire and for us to come back into fellowship with Him
- 9 times in the OT we read that God is slow to anger and abounding in love

## READ SCRIPTURE

- The sins of God's people would eventually lead to both tribe's overthrow and capture but God did not continue to remind them of their past, He kept pointing them to their future
- **John 10:10** – *I have come to that you may have life and have it to the full*
  - Prior to saying that Jesus says there is one who is wanting to steal, kill, and destroy
  - satan is a stealer of life
- What things are you doing in your life that will keep you focused on the future and not allow the enemy to keep you bound in the past?
- Well this is a good time to START

## S – Stop Making Excuses

- Our society's slogan should read, "Nothing is my fault!"
  - We blame everyone and everything else for our failures
  - Everyone is a victim
    - NFL problems
    - Even those who make horrible choices are given an out by new diagnosis that claim there is are uncontrollable emotional or physical elements that makes it impossible for them to do or act otherwise
    - Alternate Reality Syndrome – video game issue
- **Prov 28:13** (LB) - *A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance.*
- When we refuse to accept responsibility for what we do we make no effort to prepare for what the outcome will be
  - One of the primary reasons that people fail is that they fail to plan for the problems that will come (Edison – 2000 failures to arrive at the incandescent carbon filament)
  - **Prov 27:12** - *A sensible man watches for problems ahead and prepares to meet them. The simpleton never looks and suffers the consequences.*
  - Noah began to build his ark 120 years before the rain came
    - Why?
    - Because he listened – listened to God
    - God speaks in many ways
    - Pride will keep us from hearing God and taking the sound advice of others
  - Perseverance becomes an important component of our lives when we stop making excuses
    - **Prov 24:10** – *If you give up when trouble comes, it just shows that you are weak.*

## T – Take a Regular Inventory of Your Life

- Remember the events that you have come through and learn from them
- If I know that there is a hole in the sidewalk outside my house I would not continue to walk that same way after falling in the first time
  - Why do we continue to make the same mistakes over and over?
  - Because we do not look honestly at our lives
  - God will use 4 experiences to help shape your life
    1. Personal – your family growing up, friendships, current family
    2. Vocational and educational
    3. Spiritual – church, reading His word, retreats, seminars
    4. Painful
  - God uses each and every one of these and so should we embrace them all

## A – Act in Faith

- Your life and what you receive in it from God will only be as great and go as far as your faith takes you
  - **Matt 9:29** – (speaking to 2 blind men who had come to Jesus for healing)  
... “*According to your faith let it be done to you*”
  - **Matthew 8** – the faith of the centurion
- Real, living faith is active. Not the dead wishes of a weak hope
  - Active by what we do in faith coupled with an attitude of prayer and willingness to surrender my will to Him
  - This faith is one of confidence not one of self-pity playing the victim
- Learn from the past, act in faith for the future and look to God at all times for guidance.

## R – Refocus

- **Prov 4:23** - *Above all, be careful what you think because your thoughts control your life*
- The Bible talks a great deal about the mind and what we choose to dwell on in our thinking
  - Thoughts that are contrary to the Word of God are not sin but how long we dwell on them and what we do with them can become sin.
  - **Rom 12:2** – *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*
  - A renewed mind only comes with effort and focus on the right things
  - God’s Word is the first, best place to focus our minds
    - **Psalm 1** – blessed are those who meditate on God’s word because they will be happy (blessed) and find success in what they do
    - God’s word fulfills even the most basic of the human need – happiness and success

## T – Trust

- To trust means to depend on
  - Not on our own strength



- Not on our own wisdom or intellect
- Not on our own resources
- Not on the ways of the world
- Our dependence (our trust) must be on God and God alone
- *Zech 4:6 - 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.*
- Trust in God to be faithful to His word
- Trust Him to see you through the difficult times
- Trust Him to teach, instruct, and help you to grow

Are you interested in making a fresh start this New Year?

As always, you have the choice to either make your way to these new things or stay exactly where you are and allow the fullest blessings of God to pass you by.