

Something New

Isaiah 43:18-21

January 3, 2021

HDBC

A wife came into the bathroom and saw her husband on the scales, holding in his stomach. She chuckled and said, *you don't really think holding in your stomach is going to cause you to weigh less, do you?* He frowned and responded, *no, but it's the only way I can see the numbers. Ouch!*

Some people begin a new year with thoughts of losing weight, getting into shape, getting their finances in order, and any number of good things. There is never a bad time to set positive goals and to determine to turn bad habits into good. However, the beginning of a new year seems to be a natural time.

Welcome to 2021. In our lifetime there has probably never been a more anticipated **new year**. The hope and desire is that this year will be different from the last . . . in a positive way! We certainly anticipate that to be true, at least as far as the pandemic is concerned. With the vaccine and the increased awareness of how to treat this virus, we hope we can soon move forward.

Isn't it amazing how something so small that it cannot be seen with our natural eyes has impacted the world in such a negative way. We are smarter, richer and healthier than most people were a thousand years ago. We know more information, can do more things than ever before. Yet we have been reminded once again that **we are not the masters of the universe**, much less of our own lives. We are more vulnerable than many of us thought possible.

If there is a lesson learned from 2020 I hope that will be it. We are not invincible. We do not control our own destinies. We are vulnerable to things that can harm and kill us. **We need help. We need a Savior. We need God.** And He is ready and willing to come to our aid, to show us His love, to forgive our sins and to adopt us into His own family.

We are now three days into this new year, a year that contains 365 days. These are like 365 blank pages upon which you will add to your story. What will be inscribed on the pages of your book? Will you continue to live in the past, or will you see 2021 as an opportunity for new thoughts, new growth, a new determination to do things that really matter; things that will make a difference?

I have chosen Isaiah 43:18-21 as our text. **READ IT.**

1. The Context

Isaiah was a prophet who ministered in Judah 740-690 BC. During this time Assyrians defeated Israel (Northern Kingdom). Judah, in the south was heading for same fate - Babylonians. He had a two-fold message from God that he repeatedly delivered to the people.

1) God will judge sin.

He is offended and grieved by sin. He makes it clear that sin brings judgment. Just because it seems that they were getting away with their idolatry, immorality and pride did not mean they were free from judgment. ***Judgment delayed does not mean judgment denied.*** Any time there is a delay in judgment it is a sign of God's grace and mercy.

2) Grace to those who repent.

Isaiah promised a coming judgment from God. But he also promised a coming restoration. Judgment would be followed by grace, mercy and new beginnings. Judgment would come in the form of **captivity**, but they would not be in captivity forever. There would be a time when they would breath free air again, when they would work their own land again, where they would enjoy freedom and blessing.

In this passage, Isaiah is focusing on restoration that will follow captivity. God will discipline, but he will also restore. These few verses point to more than the physical return of Israel to their land, it points to a future when God will make all things new and right. It is with this in mind that Isaiah issues the challenge found in these verses. That's the context.

2. The Challenge (18)

The challenge is to forget the past. To let go of it in order to move ahead.

Even at the time of Isaiah, Israel had an **illustrious past**. And with hard times upon them it would have been easy to live in that past. They might have dwelt on the glory days of old.

The exodus and destruction of Egyptian army.

The defeat of the mighty city of Jericho and conquest of the land.

The death of Goliath and dynasty of King David.

The building of the temple and kingdom expansion under Solomon.

Or they may have been tempted to dwell on past failures.

Golden calf thing while Moses was on Mt. Sinai

Repeated bad decisions made during the time of the Judges.

Disastrous reign of King Saul.

National scandal caused by King David in committing adultery.

In either case, Isaiah encourages his people to move forward. This is not a call to forget the past. In this very chapter he reminds them of what God has done in the past to bolster their faith and courage for the future. We must remember what God has done. But we must not live in the past.

Ponder - Has the idea of mulling over something. Mental nostalgia.

Consume your thinking. Our memory is important in helping us do better in the future, but it can cripple us if we attempt to live in it or to allow it to control us in the present. Isaiah says it is time to clear our minds of the clutter of the past. Here are some things I suggest we let go.

1) Past Hurts

Disagreements, hurt feelings, etc. Time to let them go. Write them down in your mind as if on chalk board. One by one erase them.

Life too short to carry the chains of bitterness that grow each hour that unforgiveness remains in your heart. Cancer of the soul. Chokes out joy and peace and stifles laughter.

Leonardo da Vinci - engineer, draftsman, thinker, artist. Famous for "Last Supper." It has been reported that he had a quarrel with fellow-painter - face of that man as Judas, but when painted face of Christ, couldn't until he changed face of Judas. I don't know if that is true or just a legend, but either way it illustrates the importance of letting go of hurts.

2) Past Failures

All great men of Bible failed. **Paul** was a persecutor of the church. **Peter** denied Christ on the night of His arrest. **Barnabas** fell into hypocrisy.

Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it as he had been commanded.

Edison working on incandescent light, each experiment failed he would toss it out window. When asked about his failures he responded that he had not failed. He had simply found a number of ways not to make a light bulb.

3) Past Sins

Whatever past sin is haunting you, confess it, and forget it. Abortion, sexual sins, lies, alcohol/drugs, etc.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

John R. Rice, No matter what a man's past, his future is spotless.

Living in past victories can lead to pride.

Living in past failures can lead to discouragement.

3. The Promise (19)

Why forget past? Future will be so much better. God has something brand new for each of us this year. We need to go into this new year with the expectation that God has some new things. God never lives in the stale past, but is always working in creative new ways for us in the present and for the future. Isaiah provides two illustrations.

A. *Roadways in the wilderness*

Directions, destinations. Jan and I love to travel the smaller highways and county roads of our region and state. Each time we do we see new things that we had never seen before. God has some new roads for us this year. New roads take us to new places and lead us to new experiences. It may mean a new career, new home, new relationships, new opportunities. He may have some brand new destinations for you this coming year.

May not mean outward changes, i.e., job, home, etc., but it will involve new challenges, opportunities. Wherever His road takes you, it will be a

trip unlike any you've ever experienced. It will require **faith**. Trusting God regardless of the circumstances or the challenges.

When he was learning to fly, James Brown said his instructor told him to put the plane into a steep and extended dive. He was totally unprepared for what was about to happen. After a brief time the engine stalled, and the plane began to plunge out-of-control. It soon became evident that the instructor was not going to help him at all.

After a few seconds, which seemed like eternity, his mind began to function again. He quickly corrected the situation. He then turned to the instructor and began to vent his fearful frustrations on him.

He very calmly said to me, "There is no position you can get this airplane into that I cannot get you out of. If you want to learn to fly, go up there and do it again."

At that moment God seemed to be saying to him, "Remember this. As you serve Me, there is no situation you can get yourself into that I cannot get you out of. If you trust me, you will be all right." That lesson is worth learning for all of us.

B. *Rivers in the desert*

Represents new times of refreshment and encouragement. New joys. The Lord has some exciting times planned for you this year, don't miss them by being outside His will, doing your own thing, holding on to the past. Stay in His word. Spend time in prayer. Talk with other people about the Lord and about your faith. Find some who will help sharpen you in your faith. Find some whom you can help sharpen in their faith. Some of the greatest joys in life come when we serve, when we give of ourselves for a greater cause.

4. The Praise (20-21)

A. From Creation

Fascinating picture. The animals will be praising God because He has brought water to the wilderness and rivers to the desert. If the statement ended there, it would certainly make sense. However,

there is an added statement.

To give drink to My chosen people. The water was not primarily for the ostrich or the jackal, but for the people of God. Even then, the animal kingdom is seen praising God. Every part of creation sees the special bond that God has with humanity. They will praise God for what He does for His people. What a cool picture!

B. From People

However the praise will not end there. The people whom God has formed will also declare praise and worship to Him. We praise Him because He is worthy of our praise. Will you make worship of God a priority in 2021? ***Declaring my praise*** implies public, open worship before others. Willingness to declare our allegiance to Him before the nations.

For some, 2020 may have been the worst year of your life. One challenge after another, defeats, frustrations, troubles. Say goodbye to them. Brand new day dawning. For others it might have been best year. Victories, joys, prosperity. Forget it. 2021 will offer new challenges.

Don't let your past be bigger than your future!

Close by reading the Living Bible paraphrase of verse 18 – 19
Have them close their eyes and listen. This is what God says to you!

Forget all that--it is nothing compared to what I'm going to do! For I am going to do a brand new thing. See, I have already begun! Don't you see it?