

DISCOVER THE FUTURE; MOVE BEYOND THE PAST

The past is past and cannot be changed, so we will look to the future.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ The start of each year is always significant as we come to a time of stocktaking, renewal, resolve, new endeavours, new vision, and new hope.
- ❖ But does it not seem strange to be speaking of 'newness' during deadest time of the year?
- ❖ There may well be a lesson for us in this. Just because something looks dead does not mean it is dead. By way of example, Jesus gave a little parable in John 12:24 (NKJV):
"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."
- ❖ In other words, our hopes, dreams and plans may seem dead, buried and trampled into the ground, and we may have absolutely no vision of future success, but God has put certain factors to work on our behalf, even though we may have no personal strength remaining.
- ❖ He knows how to use the dirt, the water, the planting (burial)—even the trampling—to bring about an abundance of new life that would have been otherwise impossible. This is how seeds were designed to grow and multiply!
- ❖ So the wisdom of beginning a new year when everything seems to be dead is that it forces us to realize that we are still alive and have the ability to go forward.
- ❖ Let us look at this from another angle. There are many things we can refer to if we choose to catalogue our faults and failures, but there is a particular biblical response that the wise man Solomon laid out for us:
"Do not lie in wait like an outlaw against the home of the righteous; do no violence to the place where the righteous live; for though they fall seven times, they will rise again; but the wicked are overthrown by calamity" (Proverbs 24:15-16 NRSV).
- ❖ This is crucial. We will fall. We will fail. We will disappoint both God and ourselves with some of our nonsensical actions. But we will get back up and keep moving forward!
- ❖ The apostle Peter was a man who knew failure intimately. He had a big mouth, was very impulsive, and told Jesus that he would never fall away or deny Him even if it meant his own death (Matthew 26:31-35).

KEY SCRIPTURES

Mark 16:1-7; John 12:24;
Proverbs 24:15-16; Philippians 3:12-16;
Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75

- ❖ But when 'push came to shove', Peter could not even stand up to a couple of servant girls and a group of bystanders who identified him as a follower of Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75). He denied Him three times and proved himself to be an abject failure.
- ❖ Yet, on the day of His resurrection, Jesus specifically sent a message to Peter through an angel (Mark 16:5-7): "Head up to Galilee—I want to meet with you there!"
- ❖ Let us remind ourselves of the fact that the Lord never abandons His children, even when we fall short of what we should be. He continues to encourage us to forget the past and embrace the glorious future He has in store for us.
- ❖ Let us get up out of the "Slough of Despond" John Bunyan wrote about in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and go forward into the great promise of the New Year, hand in hand with Jesus.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. Now that we have entered into a new year, take a moment to reflect on 2017:
 - Were there occasions of triumph you experienced and what were they? Were the triumphs long-lasting or did they fade over time?
 - Conversely, were there situations that looked dead to you in 2017? Did those same situations arrive DOA (dead on arrival) in 2018?
2. When a person flat-lines, a defibrillator may be applied to "jumpstart" the heart. For those situations that seem dead in your life, what are some of the things you can do to bring them back to life?
3. How do you plan to move beyond the past and discover your future? Pray for God's guidance in helping you to do so.







Prayer Time

Lord, help me to not remain stuck in the past, but to move forward and upward in You.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 2018

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

-  (Reminds me/Confirms)
-  (New idea)
-  (Think about)
-  (Do this)
-  (Speaks to my heart)
-  (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

L.G. Ice-Breaker: What is your cutoff date for saying "Happy New Year" to people?