

A Forward Moving God

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In Christ, God desires to continually move us into new things as His will unfolds in our lives. For us to fully experience His plans and blessings for the future, we must align ourselves with God's heart and walk in humble obedience to His will.

Isaiah 43:18-25

[Isa 43:15-25 NKJV] 15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King.” 16 Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty waters, 17 Who brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power (They shall lie down together, they shall not rise; They are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick): “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. 20 The beast of the field will honor Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen. 21 This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise. 22 But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; And you have been weary of Me, O Israel. 23 You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, nor wearied you with incense. 24 You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; But you have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities. 25 I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.”

Every day I walk with the Lord, I am reminded that we ***follow and serve a God who is into doing new things!***

In reading the scripture, it doesn't take long to discover that God is always on the move and always doing something new.

- He's always making old things new, doing new works, pouring out new wine into new wineskins, and making new creations out of fallen people.
- In Christ we live under a new covenant, the old things have passed away and all things have become new!
- The Bible speaks to the fact that God will continue doing new things until time itself as we know it, ends.
- Ultimately, He will establish a new Kingdom, He will create new heavens and a new earth, and will bring a New Jerusalem down from heaven.

My mind can't fathom what heaven will be like, but I tend to think **heaven will be an eternal experience of newness**. Every moment in eternity will be a brand new moment of perfection, and it will go on forever!

Application

God created time... **Maybe you've noticed that time is something that only moves in one direction—FORWARD.** God made it that way because He always wants our eyes of faith always on the horizon, looking for what He is going to do next and how we can be a part of it. God has authored a beginning and an end, and the only way to get from the beginning to the end is to move forward!

The beauty is that it doesn't matter how old or young you are, if you're a new believer or have walked with Christ for years, God wants to continue to do new things in and through you.

- This, of course, isn't to diminish what He's done in the past (we will look closer at that in our text today), but it's to remind us that God is never done working or moving... and He is never done asking us to work and move with Him.
- Today I want to assure you, regardless of what life circumstances you are facing, no matter what the past year has held, God is desiring you to move forward with Him into the new things He wants to do. New doesn't necessarily mean easy or comfortable, but it does bring anticipation of watching God do amazing things in and through our lives.
- This is not something to fear. It's not something to dread. When you embrace it, you will find that moving forward with God brings unspeakable joy, peace, and purpose into life.
- The only other option is to move backward or get stuck... and neither of those options is preferable to walking in God's perfect will!

This morning's passage from the prophet Isaiah reflects these very things about God's heart.

In this passage, we find a contrast between God's desire to move His people into a new season of blessing and restoration, and God's people tragically unwilling to move forward with God.

Instead of finding blessing in God's will, they find God's will a burden. Instead of blessing God with their worship and obedience, they choose to burden God with their sin and selfishness.

Isaiah is a book that deals primarily with two things:

A book about captivity. It deals with both the Assyrian exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the coming Babylonian captivity of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Isaiah paints a picture of Israel's idolatry, disobedience, neglect, and lawlessness leading them into God's rightful judgment.

A book about redemption. Isaiah doesn't stop with judgment. He paints a prophetic picture of God's redemption of Israel after the time of judgment is complete. He speaks to the heart of God; though discipline is needed for a season, God would not **forsake** or **forget** His people, and would ultimately send His Messiah, a suffering servant, to bring eternal hope and salvation to Israel and to the entire world.

Even though the chapter/verse divisions of the Bible were added by men for clarity and study, it is interesting that like the Bible itself, Isaiah is comprised of 66 chapters. Like the 39 books of the OT, the first 39 chapters of Isaiah focus on the covenant and the breaking of that covenant by the people of the law. The final 27 chapters of Isaiah, much like the 27 books of the NT, focus on God's redemption of Israel and the coming Messiah.

Application

As we move through this passage this morning, I want to bring out three things I believe we can practically implement in our lives so that we ensure we are an active part in the new things God wants to do through us.

Just as God wanted to move His people Israel into new things, so he desires to move us into new things; new steps of faith, new ministry opportunities, new fruitfulness for his kingdom. As we navigate the context of the passage, we will pull out three points of applications to how we can effectively move forward with God.

1. We must remember the past correctly (15-19)

[Isa 43:15-25 NKJV] 15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King.” 16 Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty waters, 17 Who brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power (They shall lie down together, they shall not rise; They are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick): 18 “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it?

When it comes to moving forward with God, the past plays a big part. Regarding the past, God tells us that there are things we ought to remember, and other things we ought to forget. God opens verse 15 by reminding his people of His ability to deliver them from bondage and captivity. To a people who would be under Babylonian captivity, this word would have been inspiring and encouraging.

- God brings back to mind that He is their creator and King. He was the one who came with supernatural might against the pursuing Egyptians when they were stuck in between Egypt and the Red Sea, their past and their future.
- He was the one who came with might and parted the sea to make a path to freedom.
- He was the one who came with power and vengeance to swallow the invading Egyptian army, their horses, and their chariots.

If God was willing and able to do that before for His people, how much more will He do it again? If He can make a path in the waters, can He not make a road in the wilderness from Babylon back to Jerusalem? If He could feed and water them in the wilderness, could He not make rivers in the desert to bring His people back home?

Application

Here is God's point: ***“Don't forget what I have done in the past because it speaks to what I am capable of doing in the future!”***

Christian, can you say along with me that through the trials and the tribulations, through the difficulties and doubt, through our faithlessness and failures, God has been faithful to carry us?

Moments you were in the fog and couldn't see the horizon, God was working behind the scenes to bring about something you could have never known or fathomed.

Even in and through the inevitable pain of living in a fallen, broken world, God has redeemed our suffering and sickness and pain to bring about beautiful things all around us.

And the hope we always have in the midst of a challenge is that one day when we see Him face to face and see all things clearly, we will look at Him and say with full assurance, "You have certainly done all things well!"

REMEMBER: When you were in need and God miraculously provided. When you were sick and now you're in remission. When you got fired from that job but landed a new job where a coworker came to know Christ. When you prayed and prayed and prayed without an answer until one day you saw it all come together and were blown away. When your marriage was on the rocks and you turned to the Lord and His word and He restored it to beauty.

Why Remember? Because you will face all those things and more in the days to come, and when you do you need to have full assurance that God is going to pull you through to the end. You won't be finished here until God sees fit to be done with you!

Quote

Forgetfulness of God's past faithfulness can lead to future failure. When we forget what He has done before, sometimes we fail to trust Him in the present and for the future.

Josh /

This is why it's so important not only to tell our children about all that God has done but encourage them to have their own personal experience and relationship with God. During the period of the Judges, Israel was constantly falling back into idolatry and forgetfulness of their God. In part, this was because one generation failed to pass on what God did for them to the next. But also because the next generation didn't have any personal experience with God themselves.

This is typically what happens when we forget about God. We forget about how He saved us from the pit of sin we were in. We forget about how He delivered us from our bondage to sin. We forget how He provided for us when we thought it was over. We forget about how He protected us in so many circumstances.

Wilderness wandering: the children of Israel spent 40 years needlessly wandering through the wilderness because they could never come to a place of true faith. It seems as though every time God did something miraculous, at the first sign of trouble they forgot God, remembered Egypt and complained!

We forget and as a result of our forgetfulness, when things get tough our tendency can be to turn to other "gods" to fulfill us and meet our need. Money, entertainment, stuff, anything that might give us a temporary fix.

God charged His people and warned them of this danger ahead of time:

Deu 4:9 NKJV – Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren...

Illustration

It reminds me of the three older ladies that were sitting around a table. They were discussing the travails of getting older. One said, “Sometimes I catch myself with a jar of mayonnaise in my hand while standing in front of the refrigerator, and I can’t remember whether I need to put it away or start making a sandwich.”

The second lady chimed in with, “Yes, sometimes I find myself on the landing of the stairs and can’t remember whether I was on my way up or on my way down.”

The third one responded, “Well, ladies, I’m glad I don’t have that problem. Knock on wood,” as she wrapped her knuckles on the table, and then said, “That must be the door, I’ll get it!”

We must never forget God’s past faithfulness, but then God says something that seems to almost contradict that statement: **18 “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it?”**

He just told them to remember His former deliverance, but then tells them to remember not the former things! What’s He saying? I believe He is talking about 2 things.

1.) Don’t idolize the past.

Application

God is saying that the new work will have the same trademark of the old work, but it will also be different!

- Sometimes we long for the “good ole days.” It’s been said that the good old days is a combination of a bad memory and a good imagination!
- We say things like, “Oh if God would only move as He did back in the Jesus movement!”
- We frequently take our best memories about God and want to copy and paste them into the future.
- Although there are certain qualities of God’s work that remains the same, I’ve discovered that you can’t box God into the method and mode He will do next.
- Let’s make sure not to confine God to our past memories, but to have faith and flexibility to whatever new thing God is going to do next, even if it seems a little uncomfortable for us!

2.) **Don’t dwell on your past mistakes.**

God is speaking to a people who were in a season of discipline and judgment because they failed and disobeyed. They needed to feel the consequences of their disobedience. They needed to come to a place of true repentance. But God knew something about them and it’s the same thing He knows about all of us.

[If we get stuck dwelling on our failures and unworthiness, we will never get into a place to receive His grace and move forward in His forgiveness and mercy.](#)

God says, "I want to do a new thing! It's going to spring forth out of your failure by my grace! But in order for you to walk in it, you're going to have to let go of the former things, the former failures, and even the former successes. You can't walk into the future while you're trying to hold onto the past. ***You can't live from yesterday's successes, and you can't get stuck in the mire of yesterday's failures.***

[Rom 8:1 NKJV] 1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Beware the danger of staying under condemnation after you have been forgiven. There's no time to mope around in your self-pity. Repent, ask forgiveness, then get back up and move toward God's plan. Make things right with those you've wronged, accept God's loving discipline in your life, and believe that God is a redeemer and restorer. He can take what Satan intended for evil and use it for good.

NOTE: It's true, there might be inevitable consequences of sin that you might have to carry, even for the rest of your life. The scars of sin might not ever fully disappear this side of heaven, but that doesn't mean God is done! It doesn't mean that there isn't hope for the future in Christ.

Quote

Dwell on God's past faithfulness, not your past failures.

Josh /

2. We must trust God in the present (19-21)

19 Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. 20 The beast of the field will honor Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen. 21 This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise.

Israel in Captivity

For a people who would be sitting in captivity, it would require faith for them to believe that God would do such things. Notice the things that God promises:

- A road in the wilderness – make a way into God's promise despite a hostile environment.
- Rivers in the desert – sustenance and refreshment in a dry and draining place.
- The blessings of God will even benefit the animal kingdom in the region!

Why? Because God formed them for Himself and their job is to declare His praises!
In the same way, God has formed us. 1 Peter 2:9 tells us that He called us out of darkness into His marvelous light that we might declare His praises!

When we are in the midst of discouragement or discipline, we must not allow our present realities to cause us to doubt God's promises.

- In Christ, God will still make a way through the hostile environment of the world.
- In Christ, God will sustain and refresh our souls through the living water of the Holy Spirit that bubbles forth as we walk through this temporary wilderness called life.

Application

I have personally found it very easy to question God's future promises based on my present reality.

If my day, week, or year is going poorly or not as I planned, I tend to forget that God is still faithful, that He is still coming back one day, that I am going to dwell with Him forever in perfection.

I forget that every promise of God in Christ Jesus is yes and amen.

I tend to doubt His promise that He will never leave me nor forsake me.

I begin to measure my present circumstances, not by faith in the promises of God's word, but by my own limited perception of my circumstances.

This is why Paul, in 2 Corinthians, says that here and now we walk by faith and not by sight. Our temporary sight will seek to deceive us into doubting the promises of God. But eyes of faith will move forward, trusting Him, even though I can't see the outcome

NOTE

Note the phrase at the end of verse 19: Now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it?

The tense of that verse indicates that God is going to do something new (future), but it has already begun and if one looks close enough, with spiritual eyes, they can see it happening.

The CSB translation renders the passage like this:

“Look, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming. Do you not see it?”

You see Christian, if we look close enough at our lives, at our world, our community, our families our relationships with spiritual eyes of faith, we will see that God is always working, even now. The things that happen daily in our lives are actually the very things God is using to prepare us for eternity with him. Sometimes, all we need is a perspective change.

Quote

Your current difficulty might be the soil for God's new work!

Josh /

Illustration

But just as we shouldn't idolize the past, we shouldn't idolize the present.

- Many of the Babylonian captives chose not to return from Babylon because they were comfortable there. The comfort of Babylon was more attractive than the challenges and difficulty of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, even though it was God's promise and blessing
- It's true that from a temporal perspective, sometimes the comforts of the present look more attractive than the challenges of stepping out in faith to walk in obedience to God.

The problem? By holding on to the ease of the present, we miss out on the greater blessings of the future.

3. We must align our hearts with God for the future

Example: there have been several times I've had to take my car into the shop to get my alignment fixed. I remember I hit a deer once. My car was spared, but it drifted right every time I took my hand off the steering wheel. In the same way, sin and unbelief cause our lives to drift off course from God's will.

The conclusion of this passage of scripture is tragic and beautiful all at the same time.

Here we see God declaring a promise and a desire to bring forth something new and beautiful for His people. The only problem? His people are resisting His new work!

Bible Verse

22 But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; And you have been weary of Me, O Israel. 23 You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, nor wearied you with incense. 24 You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; But you have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.

The Slow Slip

Here we find a slow and steady slip away from God. I've learned that it doesn't take much to move us out of walking in the Spirit into walking in the flesh. And here were the markers:

They lost the discipline of seeking God – when you stop calling out to the Lord, you will begin to call out to other things. There is a spiritual battle surrounding your alone time to seek and hear from the Lord. When you allow that battle to be lost, the next thing happens.

EXAMPLE: airplane mode. Cuts out any outside transition. Becomes independent.

They began to see God as a burden instead of a blessing – This happens every time we give ourselves to idols. Our flesh will gravitate towards apathy. Somehow we believe the lie that disobedience is more rewarding than obedience and that the passing pleasures of this world are more satisfying than the treasures of knowing Christ.

They stopped honoring God with their worship – We have a tragedy in America of an, “I don’t need church” syndrome. Even though Hebrews clearly tells us not to neglect that gathering of ourselves together, there seems to be this obsession with being better than the organized church. “I just do church with me and God.” In reality, this is just an excuse for the flesh to avoid accountability, to avoid transformation, and to avoid submission. It’s part of a bigger problem of people growing weary of God and holding back their worship that is due Him.

They burdened God with their sins – God basically says, “If anyone here is burdened with the other, it shouldn’t be you with me. You’re the ones who are keeping yourselves out of my blessings through your disobedience.”

We must be careful, as Paul told us, to not allow sin to reign in our mortal body. ***Sin is a stealer. Intentional, unrepentant sin robs us of joy, peace, wisdom, and so much more, but most of all, it robs us of deep and unhindered intimacy with God.***

Application

This new year is a great time to evaluate if there are areas of life where we have slipped out of alignment with God.

- Are there areas of my life that have held onto sin that God is convicting me of?
- Have I arranged my priorities in a way that has blocked God from being involved?
- Have I grown slack in my commitment to worship and the church?
- Has my generosity waned?
- Have I allowed selfishness to rule in my marriage and relationships?
- Have I allowed my flesh to dictate my actions rather than walking in the Spirit?
- Am I holding resentment towards God because things haven’t worked out the way I hoped they would?

These are just a few, I believe the Holy Spirit will reveal things to you. But I challenge you and myself in this way because I don’t want any of us to miss out on the new, incredible things God wants to do in and through our lives!

Bible Verse

[Isa 30:15 NKJV] 15 For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: “In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” But you would not...

4 of the most tragic words in the scripture – but you would not!

Application

And this is not to put the weight of success entirely upon your shoulders. In fact our final verse today should offer you the hope and encouragement you need. **25 I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.”**

The fact is, we are all incredibly unworthy of His love, yet for HIS OWN sake, He has chosen to remember our sins no more. At the cross of Calvary, He absorbed the death and rottenness of our transgressions and rebellion!

Today, because of Jesus, God has made the path open and accessible to us to move forward in His perfect will! If we would humble ourselves, confess our shortcomings, cling to His grace and be filled with His Spirit, then the future is an exciting one! It is a future full of new works and new promises!

As we move into a new year, let's remember to do these three things:

Remember the past correctly – don't forget what God has done, but don't dwell on your past failures. God is ready to do something new.

Trust God in the present – even if your present circumstances seem far from what God has promised, just remember that He is using your present to refine your faith and prepare you for what lies ahead.

Align with God for the future – let's ensure that we don't miss out on something incredible God wants to do in and through us because we refuse to believe, or we want to hold on to some area or sin or rebellion.

If we do those things, I believe we can agree with and pray along with Paul the apostle:

“[Phi 3:13-14 NKJV] 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”