

YESTERDAY

2012. Usually the newspaper lists the great achievements or noteworthy events of the past year on its December 31st or January 1st Headline page of the paper. On this last day of 2012, we think back of memorable days and happy times that God blessed us with in 2012. But many of us, when we look back at the past year, or further, recall sad events and dumb things that we did. In Isaiah 43:18, it says, "Forget about what has happened before. Do not think about the past. We have done things that we have regretted in 2012, and it is real easy to dwell on those mistakes, maybe those mistakes or sins go back even further than 2012. I talk to so many people who say, "I blew it! I really made a mistake, and I'm going to have to live with it the rest of my life." They have doomed themselves. They've imposed a self-imposed sentence that they must be unhappy the rest of their life because they made a mistake. The truth is, God loves to give people a second chance. It's His nature. It's His grace. He loves to give people a second chance. Your past is past. It's over, done, finished. Forget it, move ahead! People say, "But you can't unscramble eggs!" But you can make an omelette. If life gives you a lemon, make lemonade. Make the best of a bad situation. Turn it around. God says, "I can return beauty for ashes. I will restore the years the locusts have eaten away." He says, "I want to make your life count." Don't cling to the events of the past.

God is saying, "It's not so much where you've been that counts, but it's the direction of your feet -- where they're headed now, that's what counts." Forgive yourself and move forward. Listen to what God does with our past mistakes. Isaiah 1:18 says, *Isaiah 1:18 "Come, let's talk this over, says the Lord. No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow."* There is no detergent in the world that can make that claim. He takes out those spots that cannot be removed even by Super All Powerful Dominant Cheer. "I can take the stain out," He says, "I want to clean your conscience. I want to clear your memory. I want to set you free from regrets so you can get on with the future." He says, "I don't want to rub it in, I want to rub it out." That's what God does with our sins. He doesn't rub them in. He rubs them out. His Son Jesus Christ rubbed them out by his death on the cross for us.

The Bible says that God forgives instantly. There's no delay, no wait, no drawing it out or hesitation on His part. It's the exact opposite of the way we like to forgive. When we forgive we like people to suffer a while. We want to stick the knife in and have the person grovel, come back and beg and plead for forgiveness.

God forgives us completely. We like to hold on to a little bit of the guilt so we can have leverage against the person. You don't want to completely forgive them. Psalm 103:3 *"As far as east is from west, you have removed my sins from me."* East and west never end. And God says you're never going to see those sins again. He puts them out of reach.

Isaiah 38:17 *"You have cast all my sins behind Your back."* God doesn't want to look at them. He says, "Let's put them in the background. Let's not focus on them any more."

How long do you remember the bill that's been paid for? Last month's utility bill that you were all upset about, once it was paid for are you still worried about it? No. Once a bill has been paid for, you forget it. The sin has been confessed, has been paid for. Forget it.. Get on with life. Tonight, I leave my past behind.

TODAY

A number of years ago, in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, there was an artist named Gerhard Miller. He wanted to always remember the blessings that God gave him today. So, he and his wife would light a candle each morning at their breakfast table, where the words were inscribed on a placard, "This is the Day the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it." Make the most of this 24 hours, was the philosophy of Gerhard Miller. And his philosophy echoes the philosophy of our Lord. Make the most of Today. The past is behind us, and the future is not yet here, not yet ours. Today is God's present gift. Today is the time to repent, to believe, to recommit, to trust, to bear witness, to love, to forgive, to do! We need to make the most of this 24 hours that God gives us.

Whatever the challenge is for today, stop saying, "I can't" and start saying, "I can". The person who says, "I can't" and the person who says, "I can" are both right. Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Do you really believe that verse? There's nothing I can't master! That means there's nothing I'm going to hit in the next 365 days, no problem, no situation, no circumstance, no hassle that I can't handle, that I can't manage, that I'm not competent to handle. On my own effort? Of course not! But "...with the strength that Christ gives me." Circle that phrase. With the help of Christ. We're not talking here about positive thinking. We're talking here about supernatural power. You're not just psyching yourself up -- "I think... I think ... I think I can... I think I can..." There are some things that, no matter how much you think you can, you can't. And no matter how much you think you can, you're not going to be able to do it. That's the difference between pop psychology and Christianity. There are a lot of good self help books that tell you what to do. They just don't give you any power to do it. Be disciplined and have self control." They tell you what to do but they don't give you the power to do it. That's why you need Jesus Christ.

I can handle anything. I believe I can change. Not on my own power, but with the power that Christ gives me, I can handle it. The Bible is full of stories of people who changed because they believed that they could change after God talked to them. God came to a guy named Moses: "I want to use you to save a nation." Moses said, "Me? I got kicked out of Egypt because I killed a guy. I'm a murderer. Now I'm out here feeding sheep. And on top of that, I stutter! I'm slow of speech. You ant me to be the spokesman for a nation?" God said, "Yes. I'm going to use you."

God came to a guy named Gideon, when the nation of Israel was over run by the enemy: "I'm going to use you, Gideon, to save the country." Gideon said, "Me? I am the youngest kid in the poorest family in the smallest tribe in the nation." God said, "Yes. I'm going to use you."

God came to a guy named Jeremiah. "I want you to be my spokesman. My preacher. I want you to be a teacher of the nation." Jeremiah said, "Me? I'm Mr. Depression. I'm always in a blue funk. I'm a guy who's depressed all the time. Not only that, I'm a teenager." But God said, "I'm going to use you." He used a depressed teenager.

God can use me and God can use you. The good news is God wants to use you today. Believe whatever problem or challenge you face today, that God can give you the power to deal with it.

FOREVER

What does the future hold for me in 2013? Will I be alive next December 31st? Will I have an accident or some debilitating disease in the next year? Will I still be employed? Will my kids encounter some sort of tragedy? Put your worries aside. Our time is in God's hands. He is going to keep us in under his watchful care forever.

"He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all good things?" Suppose a man comes upon a child being beaten by thugs. He dashes into the mob, rescues the boy, and carries him to the hospital. The youngster is nursed to health. The man pays for the child's treatment. He learns that the child is an orphan and adopts him as his own and gives the boy his name. And then, one night, months later, the father hears the son sobbing into his pillow. He goes to him and asks about the tears. "I'm worried Daddy. I'm worried about tomorrow. Where will I get food to eat? How am I going to buy clothes to stay warm? And where will I sleep?"

The father is rightfully troubled. Haven't I shown you? Don't you understand? I risked my life to save you. I gave my money to treat you. You wear my name. I've called you my son. Would I do all that and then not meet your needs?" This is Paul's question. Would he who gave his son to die on Calvary's cross for us not meet our needs in the future?

But still we worry. We worry about the IRS and the SAT and the FBI. We worry about education, recreation, and constipation. We worry that we won't have enough money, and when we have money we worry that we won't manage it well. We worry that the world will end before the parking meter expires. We worry that someday we'll learn that fat-free yogurt was fattening.

Honestly, now. Did God save you so you would fret? Would he teach you to walk just to watch you fall? Would he be nailed to the cross for your sins and then disregard your prayers? Come on. Is the Scripture teasing us when it says, "He will give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. I don't think so.

My friend, If God be for us, who in the future can be against us? There is no power on earth and no power in hell that can ever tear us away from Him. We have the strongest possible anchor. The storms will still come, but we have the assurance that God will help us ride out those storms. Our boat will never sink, since Jesus is with us always.

A bright future. A forever future with God. Join me as I say with the apostle Paul, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Forever in His Care.