

"Entering into the New Year"

Isaiah 52

Introduction: As we come here today we can certainly praise the Lord for allowing us to have another year of life. Tomorrow we shall step into another year and it can be exciting or for some it can be frightening. In this coming year we have before us an opportunity to serve our Lord and only He knows what the year will hold.

For some there will be joy and laughter, for some there will be tears and sorrow, for others there will be loss and heartache, for others there will be trials that may seem to never end, but in all of this there will be the opportunity to glorify our God.

Now because of the UNKNOWN there may be much anxiety within your heart as you face 2018. There are many verses which we could look and they would bring comfort to your heart.

Hebrews 13:5

⁵ *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, **I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.***

Romans 8:38-39

³⁸ *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

³⁹ *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.*

These are only a few of the verses in which we can find comfort as we move into the UNKNOWNS of 2018. There is another passage in which we can find great comfort for the upcoming New Year and it is Isaiah 52. Let me give you some background then we shall get into our message for today.

Beginning in Isaiah 51:1 God, through the pen of Isaiah, recorded words of encouragement for those who were in the Babylonian captivity. There was good news and the good news was that God's people were going to be released from the 70 years of captivity. They had fallen into the captivity because of sin and the captivity would last for 70 years. When the 70 years were expired they would come out and they were to come out rejoicing. That is what Isaiah 51-52:12 are all about.

Now there were within the people of Israel anxiety about going back to their home land.

Here are some questions they would have had:

1. How will the people of Babylonian respond?
2. Will it be safe to leave?
3. What about safety for the journey?
4. What about safety when they arrive back in their land?
5. What if their release was a set up and the enemy would come upon them from behind and destroy them?

These are just a few of the questions which they may have had concerning their journey. Now there is one verse in the midst of the passage before us which gives encouragement for every question and it is a verse that answers any anxiety which we may have for the upcoming year.

Notice Isaiah 52:12

Now before we get into this verse I want us to look at another verse first of all.

I. The Exhortation

Notice Isaiah 52:11

Israel found themselves in the captivity because of sin and so as they went out from the captivity they were to keep themselves PURE from the contaminations of the world. Those who would bear the vessels of the Lord would be the priests.

The idea for Israel was that they were to keep themselves free from the sin of the surrounding people. Let me show you how bad the sin was of the surrounding nations.

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

¹⁶ But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:

¹⁷ But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:

¹⁸ That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.

The sins of the people in the land of Canaan were so terrible that God ordered the execution of all the inhabitants so that Israel would not get involved in their sin. They had become involved in their sin and that is why they found themselves in the captivity. So as they would now go out of Babylon they were to keep themselves pure so as to stay in fellowship with God.

Application:

As we step into the New Year it is a new opportunity to start over for us. Maybe you are like Israel and you have fallen into sin over the year. If that is the case then draw a line in the sand and begin from this day forward to abstain from the world.

James 1:27

²⁷ Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

1 John 2:15-16

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Let me show you the prayer of Jesus for His disciples and for US:

John 17:14-15

¹⁴ I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

¹⁵ I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

We are to stay unspotted from the world so that we can walk in fellowship with our Lord and therefore be the most effective for Him.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

² *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

II. The Encouragement

Notice Isaiah 52:12

There are within this verse 3 points of encouragement for the people who were in captivity and for YOU AND ME WHO ARE GOING INTO A NEW YEAR.

A. God is the God of Today

Isaiah 52:12

¹² *For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward.*

One of the points of concern which Israel had was how the people who occupied Babylon would respond to their departure. I am sure they remembered back to when their families came out of Egypt and how Pharaoh refused to let them go. They would have also remembered the 10 plagues which God brought against Egypt. When Israel left Egypt they left in haste.

Exodus 12:39

³⁹ *And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.*

Those who were in captivity knew all about what their ancestors went through. The question was, "Would it be the same?" The answer was, "NO!". God would move the heart of Cyrus and he would send them back to Jerusalem.

Isaiah 44:28

²⁸ *That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*

Let me show you how this was fulfilled.

2 Chronicles 36:22-23

²² Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

²³ Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.

Application:

What does this mean to me? God has this very day in His hands. We do not need to push our way through closed doors but we need to allow God to open and close the doors in each of our days. We do not need to live in anxiety of what might or might not happen today for our GOD IS THE GOD OF TODAY. He will move the people who need to be moved in order for His will to be accomplished in our lives.

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

B. God is the God of Tomorrow

Isaiah 52:12

¹² For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward.

With Israel leaving Babylon there would be the concern about what tomorrow would hold or even next week or next year. How would they get the supplies to rebuild? What about protection after they arrived? There would have been hundreds of questions about TOMORROW.

God answered all of those questions by saying, "I WILL GO BEFORE YOU".

Application:

There may be anxiety in your heart about TOMORROW of next week or another time deeper into 2018. This verse tells us that GOD IS THE GOD OF OUR TOMORROWS. Let me show you what God said to Cyrus.

Isaiah 45:1-3

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

***² I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight:** I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:*

³ And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

As we move into the New Year let us not forget that God is going before us to prepare the way so that we can serve Him. He will place barriers where we are to stop and He will open doors when He desires for us to advance forward. Notice the Words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 6:33-34

³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

³⁴ Take therefore no thought for the morrow:

You may say, "The year may become difficult and then what do I rely on?"

Lamentations 3:22-23

²² It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

²³ They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9

⁷ And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

⁸ *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

⁹ *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

C. God is the God of Yesterday

Isaiah 52:12

¹² *For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.*

The word "rereward" means "REAR GUARD". One of the concerns of the Israelites would be the Persians changing their minds as Pharaoh and the Egyptians did and then pursuing them. God answered that anxiety by letting them know that He was their REAR GUARD for He was the GOD OF THEIR YESTERDAYS.

Application:

As we go into the New Year it may be the mistakes of this past year and robbing you of the joy and peace in your life. It is NOT possible to forget them but we must understand that God allows us to remember our mistakes so that we can learn from them.

Therefore we need to let them with God. We confess our sins and our faults and then we let the past with Him for He is the GOD OF OUR YESTERDAYS.

Hebrews 10:16-17

¹⁶ *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;*

¹⁷ *And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

We cannot forget the mistakes we have made but God does so we need to let the past mistakes with Him.

Conclusion:

We have 3 great anchors to hold tightly to as we enter into the New Year.

Our God is the God of:

1. **Today**

December 31, 2017

New Year's Eve AM Service

2. **Tomorrow**
3. **Yesterday**