

Happy new year and welcome! I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My name is Douglas Humphrey, I get to serve as the LP of Bridge Fellowship Church. **Where we're only about BRIDGING people Back to God through the gospel and growing healthy disciples.**

Thank you Tony for preaching in my absence on last week. It brings joy and comfort to my heart knowing that when I'm not here the Lord's church is in good hands and that ministry continues on.

Church, let's be honest—2024 wasn't a year any of us saw coming. It wasn't just the personal battles or the silent struggles; it felt like wave after wave of challenges crashing down on all of us. Communities were divided like never before. Families faced financial strains that left them wondering how to make it to the next paycheck. Anxiety about the future became a constant companion for so many. And the world? Well, the world seemed to teeter on the edge of "destruction". And already 2025 is shaping up to be more of the same.

Some of you walked through these doors today carrying those same burdens. Maybe it's the stress of a relationship that feels strained, the uncertainty of your job, or the feeling of being stuck in a cycle that never changes. Maybe you've even wondered, "Where is God in all of this?"

But here's the good news: God hasn't abandoned us. He hasn't looked away from the pain, the division, or the sleepless nights. Instead, He's preparing to do something for us—something greater. He wants to make us ready for!

## Readied For More

And we're going to explore [Isaiah 43:18-19](#) & [2 Cor 5:17](#) to discover what God has in store for us and to be made ready to receive it. Loved ones life is not going to get any easier and b/c the days are becoming increasingly dark, we need to be made ready for more so that we prevail and thrive today and into the future.

Let's lean into text and ask God do what only He can do. To prepare us for the tomorrow that awaits us. From [Isaiah 43](#), I have

### **4 Steps to Fully Embrace and Live Out God's Plan for you in 2025 and Beyond... 4 steps so that you can be READIED FOR MORE.**

In order to capture these 4 steps you need the proper equipment... Your Bible, Sermon notes, a pen, and most importantly an open and receptive heart. Let's pray to that end before we begin.

Four steps: beginning with...

### **Release yourself from your past sins and failures. v18**

*"18 "Do not remember the past events; pay no attention to things of old.*

At first glance, that's a strange instruction, is it not? "Do not remember past events; pay no attention to things of old." Forget what happened before? I don't know about you, but there are things—bad things—that I've experienced that seem unforgettable.

Take this for example the time I went to a sleep away camp once—once being the key word here. One night, I was deep in a peaceful snore symphony, when out of nowhere, another camper smacked me awake. Apparently, my snoring was ruining his life. After that, I didn't sleep for the rest of the week. I just lay there in terrified silence, hoping no one else would launch a midnight assault. That smack was so traumatic, it turned out to be my second and last time at camp.

Fast forward to college, and I couldn't stop thinking about it. When I met a new roommate, I was like, 'Hi, I'm Douglas. Do you have strong feelings about people who snore? I've never forgotten what happened at camp. All of have experiences that we can't seem to forget.

But here, through the prophet Isaiah, God tells the Israelites to "forget." To not remember their past events. It seems counterintuitive, especially for a people like Israel, who had such a rich and complex history.

Think about it: Isaiah certainly knew all about their past. He knew about God's covenant to make them a great nation, set apart as His chosen people. He knew about their slavery in Egypt and their miraculous deliverance through the Exodus. And, most recently, he was well aware of their exile—a consequence of their repeated rejection of God.

So, what does Isaiah mean by “**Do not remember**”? The Hebrew word for “**remember**” here carries a deeper meaning than simply recalling something. It's not like remembering an old phone number or a friend's birthday.

This “remembering” means to keep something so present in your mind that it shapes how you live in the present. It's when your past defines your present actions and mindset.

Let's be honest—we've all been there, haven't we? Stuck in the shadow of who we *used to be*. Where we dwell on how we used to think, the things we used to do, and the people we used to run with. Even though God's grace has made us new, there are still moments when we look in the mirror and see the *old* version of ourselves.

Maybe you're sitting here today, and when you look in the mirror of your heart, all you see is the old you. The old Doug, the old Toya, the old Marcus, the old Francis, or the old Tim.

You see the person who told that lie to protect their reputation, hoping it would help them get ahead at work. The one who cut corners on their taxes or held onto something they knew wasn't theirs.

The you who gave in to addiction—whether it was to substances, pornography, social media, or food. Maybe you see the person who stopped trusting God because life felt too unfair, or b/c his Word doesn't allow your sin of choice. Or perhaps you see the you who lashed out in anger at your spouse or your kids, leaving scars that still feel fresh.

To those of you wrestling with the weight of who you used to be—who can't seem to shake off the mistakes and failures of your past—hear me clearly: God is saying, “*Stop it!*” Stop defining yourself by the person you were. Stop letting the past dictate your future.

Don't let your past mistakes, your failures, or even the person you *used to be* define you anymore. Yes, you messed up. Not once, not twice, but over and over again. You turned away from God, and made choices you wish you could undo. But hear this: ***That was then. This is now.***

That's who you *used to be*. That's how you *used to operate*. That's how you *used to think*. **God is telling you to release the old, your past has no power over your present or your future.**

Why? Because in Jesus, you've been made new. The old version of you—the one enslaved to sin has passed away. And through the Holy Spirit, you've been given the power to live a new life. This isn't just wishful thinking. It's a statement fact. **You are not who you used to be.**

So let go of the guilt and shame of your past. Think about it: [You wouldn't go to a dirty clothes hamper to pick out what to wear to church, would you? In the same way, don't go digging into your past to define who you are right now.](#)

Today, you are a child of the Most High God. You are made in His image to fulfill His good purposes. And day by day, He is shaping you into the person He's called you to be—less and less like the old you, and more and more like Jesus. **You are being sanctified.**

But here's the thing: This transformation starts with you letting go of who you used to be. Release the old you. You are no longer defined by your past—you are defined by Jesus' love, His grace, and who He saved you to become.

**The old is gone. The new has come.** So step into it. [Release yourself from your past, that's our first step, step... 2nd...](#)

## **Reach for your next in God. v19a**

In v19 God says... **19 Look, I am about to do something new; even now it is coming.**

At the time, the Israelites were in exile, suffering the consequences of their rejection of God. He had allowed the Babylonians to conquer and punish them. Yet, through the prophet Isaiah, God brought them a message of hope—a promise that their current struggles would not define their future.

God wanted them to know that what He was about to do would surpass anything He had done before. Not because the past didn't matter, but because His new work would forever change them, for their good and His glory.

This is good news—news filled with hope and anticipation. Imagine being stuck in prison, enduring day after day of hopelessness. Then one day, you learn: “Your sentence has been shortened. Freedom is coming.” Wouldn’t that ignite hope and excitement within you? Wouldn’t it push you to prepare for the life waiting for you on the other side of those bars?

That’s the kind of hope God was offering the Israelites—and it’s the same hope He offers us today.

What I love about God is that He never leaves us in our hopelessness. He knows how heavy life can feel when we’re stuck, when the way out seems impossible. And yet, He steps in and declares, *“I have a plan for you, and I’m handling this myself.”* That’s love. He doesn’t leave us to stew in our failures or struggles.

So no matter where you are right now, remember: God is always working. And His plan is bigger than anything you’re currently going through.

So, you see the question isn’t whether God sees you or cares about your struggles. He does. The real question is: Are you ready to trust Him with your future?

God is preparing to do something new in your life—something so extraordinary that your current challenges will feel like a minor bump in the road. Think back to how He’s already worked in your life. Remember the battles He’s brought you through, the pain He’s healed, and the ways He’s restored you.

If He did it before, why doubt He’ll do it again? So, **reach for your next in God**. Step forward in faith and obedience, knowing that He has something far greater ahead. Your best days are not behind you—they’re in front of you. Trust Him, and boldly walk into the future He’s preparing for you.

That’s the 2nd step to be made ready for more. 3rd...

## **Rely only on God as the source for what He’s promised. v19b**

This call comes with two essential truths:

1. You must see God as your one and only supplier.
2. You must rely on Him to provide what He has promised.

This is important b/c there will be some who cry out to God for help, receive His response, and yet still work on a backup plan—just in case God either fails to deliver or takes longer than you expect? That kind of thinking is counterintuitive to His promises. It demonstrates that you don’t fully trust him.

That’s why, in His omniscience, after pronouncing deliverance to Israel, God asks them:

**Do you not see it?**

It’s as though He’s saying, *“Recognize who is speaking to you! I am the ‘Great I Am,’ your God. I am the One who has promised to ‘do something new’ for you. I have the power and authority to make My decree a reality. Therefore, trust in Me. Have hope in what I have promised to do.”*

Loved ones the only time we should doubt a promise is when it comes from anyone other than God - even if that someone is yourself. I’m reminded of [Proverbs 19:21](#) where it says...

**21 Many plans are in a person’s heart, but the Lord’s decree will prevail.**

Our hearts—our old sin nature—are often at odds with God’s will and cannot be trusted. They are restless, constantly jumping from one thing to the next in search of satisfaction. But God, in His infinite wisdom, knows what is truly best for us. When He makes a decree, it’s as good as done. And His will always prevails.

So, stop making backup plans. Rely fully on the One who has never failed. Trust in promises, His timing, and His provisions.

That’s the first thing we see in v.19. God continues on and says..

**Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.”**

This is the new thing that God is getting ready to do. Referring to the Exodus from Egypt an undeniable event that happened to their ancestors. Now, like then he will make a path to freedom for his people.

Physically speaking, Israel would be set free from Babylon and restored to the promised. Once they're restored God will cause them to prosper and supply their needs. Hence the reference to "river in the desert".

Spiritually speaking, God has decreed three things: their sins forgiven, their relationship with him has been restored, and that he once again will dwell among them. Remember, as a result their rebellion, God had withdrawn His presence from them. But now, He would return.

The overarching purpose of their deliverance is to bring them back to a heart of worship. Where they would whole-heartedly worship and honor God.

Now, this is where we—those not of Jewish lineage—diverge from the physical aspect of this promise. The promise to restore their land and cause them to prosper was specific to Israel.

But the spiritual aspect? Like, the Israelites God rescues us from our situations, restore our broken relationship with Him, and welcomes us into His presence. And as he does this work, our response should be heartfelt worship.

Now, let me remind you, for us, all of this has been made possible through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the bridge that reconnects us to God. Just as the Israelites couldn't restore themselves, neither could we. And let us never forget that we didn't deserve to be rescued in the first place. Yet, out His love for us, God did it any way.

So with that in mind, let me ask you: Why would you ever place your trust in anyone or anything other than God to fulfill what He has promised to do in your life?

And loved ones, let's be honest—every single one of us has been guilty of this at some point. Especially when God takes longer to deliver on His promise than we expected. Or when what He provides doesn't look like or come the way we wanted it to come.

For some of you this is a call to repent. You've been playing both sides, on the outside you present yourself as waiting on the Lord. But on the inside and behind closed doors you're a nervous wreck and you're doing everything in your power to promote yourself to where you want to be.

For others of you this is a reminder to keep trusting in the Lord, what he said he would do, he will do. Therefore, receive his grace day-by-day until he delivers you and or promotes you.

Remember the end goal is be able to worship God with a renewed and passionate heart. Which is impossible when you manufacture your own blessing. You want to be blessed. You want to be made ready for more then...

**Rely only on God as the source for what He's promised.** That's our 3rd step... 4th...

## **Remember who you are in Christ.**

The Apostle Paul tells us in [2 Cor 5:17](#) that... **If we are in Christ, we're a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!**

Paul is saying this: because you are in Christ, you are a new creation. The old you is gone; your past no longer defines you. You are now a redeemed child of God, led and nourished by the Holy Spirit, set apart from the world for God's glory.

Loved ones, your fresh start isn't tied to the calendar flipping from 2024 to 2025. No, your fresh start began with Jesus. And even when you stumble, your ability to rise again isn't because of your own strength—it's because you've already been forgiven.

When Jesus died for you, His sacrifice was final, once and for all. His blood covers all your sins—past, present, and even the ones you will commit. That's the beauty of His grace.

**“Knowing who you are in Christ empowers you to begin again when you falter. It gives you the strength to press forward, reminding you that your life belongs to God and that He deserves a return on his investment in you.**

**It gives you courage to forgive yourself because you know God has already forgiven you.**

**And it reassures you that though you may fail, you are not a failure.”**

This truth matters because it's impossible to start over if you don't have hope. That's why so many people turn to distractions, constantly reinventing themselves and seeking artificial or temporary sources of hope.

For instance, think of someone who spends all their time chasing success, thinking that the next promotion or accomplishment will finally bring peace.

Or someone who tries to escape their struggles by Binge watching Netflix or endlessly scrolling on TikTok.

Or attending a Tony Robins self-help seminar.

Those things may offer temporary relief, but they don't provide the lasting hope we need to start fresh.

But in Christ, you have a lasting hope—a hope that:

- **Releases you from past sins and failures.**
- Empowers you to **Reach for your next in God.**
- And holds you accountable to **Rely on God as your source for what he promised you.**

So, what's it going to be?

Now that you've been **Readied for More in 2025**, will you take the steps to live in alignment with who you are in Christ?

Or will you keep doing what you did in 2024 and before?

Here's the reality: life in this world is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate. Why not make your life easier by grounding yourself in the unshakable hope that Christ offers? Start now! Apply these truths to your walk, and step boldly into the year that God has ordained for you.

If this sermon has struck a cord with you and you'd like to start fresh and renew your commit to trust the Lord. Then come up front, join me at the altar in prayer. There's no shames. All of us need to do this from time to time. Would you come!

## Let's pray...

Lord Jesus, thank you for being our savior. Thank you Heavenly Father for sending Jesus to redeem our souls. We would be hopelessly lost, still stuck in our sins had it not been for you. Lord we confess that life is hard and we we've played a part in complicating by trying to fix our own problems and or doubting you, for that we are truly sorry.

Lord would want to move forward, we want to live out what it means to be made readied for more. Please give us the courage to release our selves form past sins. Help us to reach for what God has for us next. Hold us accountable to rely on you and you alone, And cause us to remember that we are in Christ.

Lord Jesus help, we need you more and more not less and less. It's in your name we confess and pray. AMEN!!!

## Closing:

CC, Rooted, Q/Prayer, LPLP