

"Forget 2025" - Isaiah 43:18-19

Use your imagination with me for just a minute and imagine you are sound asleep in your bed at night and you wake up for no good reason and you can't go back to sleep. For lots of people that is one of the most common times for it to happen. There's an unwanted flicker of a memory. A time in your life gets replayed that you wish you could forget. It's a path not taken, the job offer turned down, the harsh word said in anger, the phone call never made, the love never pursued. The word we give it is *regret*—that deep, aching sense that we could have done something differently, and everything might have changed.

Does anybody else have those feelings or is it just me? I read an article in a scientific journal online ([The Neuroscience of Regret: Why It Haunts Us](#)) that said there are a few good things that happen when we have regrets. It helps us improve future decisions. It sharpens judgment. It motivates change. It actually helps us to learn. The article also said that despite its pain, regret is not a weakness. It's a sign of depth. It requires imagination, moral awareness, self-reflection, and emotional complexity.

Here's something else I learned that helped me. The area of our brain that is responsible for regrets is the **orbitofrontal cortex** which is part of the **prefrontal cortex**. It's an area of our brains right above our eyes that is not fully developed in men until usually the mid-twenties. So, I figure any stupid mistakes I made prior to my mid-twenties I can just blame it on not having a fully developed brain. Now, feel free to insert all the jokes you want to about my brain not being fully developed. But anyhow, I'll take that as a positive because I did lots of things I regret when I was younger.

But I'm afraid the negative aspects usually far outweigh the positives. If left to itself, regret can lead to depression, anger, sadness, irritability and all kinds of problems for those of us who are supposed to be "new creations" and who have had our lives changed by a relationship with God. Do you think God wants us to live that way? Of course not. It's not beneficial to us or glorifying to Him so He tells us in His Word what to do when that happens.

We are going to be reading from my very favorite couple of verses in all of scripture this morning. And I know that's big talk. I have lots of verses that I go to regularly but since I struggle with regrets, this one is my all-time favorite. **Isaiah 43:18-19** is where we will mainly be. God is speaking through Isaiah to the nation of Israel here but don't worry, we can claim this verse for us as well. I'll explain that more later. But God is speaking to Israel at their time of captivity by the Babylonians. You might recall that Daniel was taken from Israel by the Babylonians and so was Shadrach, Meshach and Abenego. This was during that time and God revealed to them through the prophet Jeremiah that it would last seventy years.

But here in Isaiah, God is speaking to them about how they should leave Babylon. And today, maybe He is speaking to you about how you should be leaving 2025 or how you should be leaving behind all your regrets. God doesn't want you to live bogged down in those regrets so He gives us some great encouragement here. Let's read **Isaiah 43:18-19**.

*"Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.*

¹⁹*See, I am doing a new thing!*

*Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland."*

Isn't that an encouraging passage? I just love it. But isn't it interesting that God tells us in some places to forget some things and in other places He tells us to make sure we remember them? In **Joshua chapter 4** the people are led through the Jordan River and when they get across God tells them to pick up 12 stones and pile them up on this side of the river so they will always remember what God has done for them by leading them through the river on dry land. It's why we have these little rocks on the pulpit today for that same reason. If you haven't heard those stories, ask me later and I'll tell you.

So, some things God wants us to remember – usually the things God does for us – and some things He tells us to forget – like all the mistakes we have made and all the bad things that have happened to us. And here God is telling the Hebrew people to forget all the bad things because He is about to do some new good things.

Do you remember why the people of Israel had been taken into captivity by Babylon in the first place? They had been disobedient to God and He warned them if they continued that he would punish them. So, they had brought this on themselves. And they had seventy years to regret their disobedience. Seventy years of being slaves. Seventy years of being away from their homeland and working so hard to improve the lives of cruel masters.

I think of the parable Jesus told about the prodigal son in **Luke 15**. Don't you know that boy had some regrets as he fed those pigs? Don't you know he was thinking about all the stupid ways he had wasted all his father's money? He was working like a slave to feed some nasty pigs when his own belly was empty and all he could think about was being back at his father's house.

There he had food and shelter and a loving family but it was impossible to go back to that now. He finally decided he would just go back and see if his father would hire him as a hired man to work in the fields like the other hired guys. It was impossible to get back what he lost. He had wasted money and time and had lost his father's trust and even his love. But maybe he could at least get a job there. That's what he was thinking. But what happened? God provided. God healed. God blessed. That's what God does when our hearts and minds are right. And it starts with forgetting about the former things.

When I look over my 2025 calendar, I see some good times back then. I went fishing a few times. Celebrated some birthdays of special people. Had some good times here at church. But I also see a lot of things I wish weren't on there. I've had worse years but it's been a long time. And it's almost impossible to forget some of the things that happened. Thankfully, God knows that. The word for *forget* here in **verse 18** means not to dwell on it. Don't stay there in your mind focusing on such things. We can't forget completely but we can choose not to live there in the past.

Now, for some of you 2025 might have been a pretty good year. You like to think about some of the good things that happened to you. And there's not really anything wrong with that but God is telling us here not to just forget the bad things but to forget the past entirely. Again, don't dwell on it. Don't live there. Why? Because God is doing a new thing.

It is entirely appropriate that we have these little rocks on the pulpit to help us remember what God has done for us in the past. But if I got up here every Sunday and preached on **Joshua chapter 4** and we talked about all the stories of how God has protected and provided for us, I would be doing us all a disfavor because God is doing a new thing in our lives as individuals and as a church. He has protected and provided in the past but He is doing a new thing and is going to protect and provide in the future. We have something to look forward to. Let's talk about that.

I remember going to a high school class reunion years ago and several people make me think about this passage. All they could talk about was how good they were at football or how talented they were in band and all the rewards

they had gotten and how popular they were. That is really annoying. I think it is annoying to God when all we can talk about is the past, good or bad. We don't live in the past and God doesn't live in the past like that either.

For the Hebrew people this was written to, they were still in Babylon at the time. And don't you know that they remembered the times when God saved other generations from slavery? They remembered and talked about how Moses led the people through the Red Sea on dry ground (Exodus 13) and led them back to Israel. They remembered and talked about how Joshua led the people through the Jordan River on dry ground and led them back to Israel. And don't you know they wanted God to do the same for them?

What's funny is that God even reminds them of those times in the passages just prior to this one. He says in **verses 16-17**, *"This is what the Lord says—*

*he who made a way through the sea,
a path through the mighty waters,
17 who drew out the chariots and horses,
the army and reinforcements together,
and they lay there, never to rise again,
extinguished, snuffed out like a wick"*

God is saying, "Hey you remember those times when I had Moses and Joshua do those incredible things? Pretty cool, huh?" And what does He say in the very next **verse 18**? *"Forget all that stuff! I'm doing a new thing!"* Don't live in the past. God is the ultimate in creative. And so we have to be watching for what He is doing. We have to keep our focus on Him not what He has done in the past.

He says in **verse 19**, *I am doing a new thing!*

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? Are you watching for what God is doing now or are you looking in the rear-view mirror at what God has done in the past? When I think about all the ways God has protected and provided for our church in the past, I find myself wishing He would do the same thing again for us now as we look for our own building. And it's not wrong to look back and give Him glory for what He has done but I can't expect God to give us another Lake Bridgeport, if you know what I mean. Because God is always doing something new.

Sometimes I get asked what the Lord is doing in my life and I think the proper response is, *"Well, do you mean today, this week or this past year?"* Because God is always up to something new. We just have to watch for it.

Look at the end of **verse 19** again. *"I am making a way in the wilderness*

and streams in the wasteland." Again, this was written to the Hebrews who were in captivity in Babylon. God is about to take them out of that captivity and bring them back to Israel but He is telling them something here. If you left Babylon, which is modern-day Iraq and traveled to Israel it would be about 500 miles as the crow flies but closer to 1,000 miles to walk. And through that territory there is even today wilderness and wasteland. Through large parts of it even today there is no "way in the wilderness" and no "streams in the wasteland." It's dry desert. Now, today there is a highway but if you are on this highway and your car breaks down it could be fatal if you aren't prepared.

Maybe today you are stuck in the wilderness of regret or the wasteland of bad consequences. Maybe all you can think about is how impossible it looks to get out of this situation. You wake up at night thinking of all the woulda, coulda, shouldas and all the "if only's" and all the issues that the past brings to the present. Just know that God is ready to do a new thing in your life. You just have to watch for it.

What I love about this passage is that it is a promise from God for everybody and every group. Yes, it was written to Israel but it applies to us at Christ Fellowship as well. It applies to your family. And it applies to you as an individual. Paul said something very similar in **Philippians 3**, *“I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

Paul had more bad things happen to him than we ever will but he also had so many good things happen to him and yet he is trying his best to forget all that and not live in the past, whether bad or good. He wants to see and be a part of what God is doing in his life right now.

As the Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament says...“The admonition in **verse 18** does not commend utter forgetfulness and disregard, but that henceforth they are to look forwards rather than backward. The new thing which Jehovah is in the process of working out eclipses the old, and deserves a more undivided and prolonged attention.”

I heard the story of some friends who went to visit a farmer at his place and the farmer’s dog wandered up. The friend asked the dog’s name and the forgetful farmer looked at his son and said, *“Hey, what’s the name of that flower that has thorns but is real pretty?”* The boy said, *“A rose?”* The farmer said, *“Yea, rose.”* Then he hollered at his wife, *“Hey Rose, what’s the dog’s name again?”* It’s not that kind of forgetfulness. It just means to not dwell on the past and instead to look forward to how God is going to provide again, how God is going to heal again and how God is going to bless again. We don’t know and can’t imagine it but our all-creative God is fun to watch at work isn’t He?

Let’s bow our heads and close our eyes in prayer and let’s just ask God to help us with this. It’s such an encouraging passage but it’s so easy to live in the past and miss out on the blessings God has in store for us. Ask God what He wants you to choose to forget, either bad or good. Then ask Him to do it through you.

If you don’t have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus then let’s talk about that right now. I’d love to pray with you and help you to believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for your sins that the Father said was due. Ask Him to come into your life and forgive you of all your sins – all those regrets – and then let Him change your life. Do it right now as the music plays.