



Life is fleeting! Our days are numbered! Instead of counting the days, make the days count! The critical nature of redeeming our time causes us to pay particular attention to the numbers eight and nine in biblical numerology.

Eight is the number of *new beginnings*. From the areas of relationships to finance...from ill health to stabilized emotions...from pain to prosperity; the walk with God is always an opportunity for a new or continuous beginning. Nine is the number of *conclusion*. It literally means: *to bring to an end, to bring a judgment to, or to bring to a conclusion*.

This lesson is to challenge and encourage us to make this *the* year of new beginnings: to walk or continue our walk with God; and to bring an end to soul stagnation practices, like: blaming, excusing, denying, and procrastinating. This is not the year to be lazy and vulnerable; it is the year to be accountable, responsible, and productive!

I. DIGGING DEEPER

When you walk with the Lord, what was behind you no longer has power over you. What was behind you does not have to define or confine you. We are not defined by the opinions of others. From William Ernest Henley's poem *Invictus*, it seems like the idea purported that we are the master of our fate and the captain of our soul has given us the freedom to cast aspersions without consideration that we have a Supreme Being Whom we have to answer. Should the hurtful things said to us, about us or the wrongs done to us be the determinant factor as to the person we are or trying to become? People's assessment or evaluation of us should not cause us to lose focus on Whose we are.

What's important is that God knows the truth and He is not finished with us; we are being made over by our Creator.

By allowing our past to preside in the present causes the present and future to be spiritually paralyzed! Moving on to a new life, a new day, and a new identity, can reverse the spiritual paralysis process. We have the potential to become all we can in Christ by taking the first step in God's direction (*cf.* Joh 14:6).

While it is not within our power to change past experiences, we can control how we handle the present. When disturbing thoughts enter your mind about your past, rather than responding in the same habitual way; pause, take a deep breath, then evaluate them. Ask yourself, "How did that experience make me stronger?" "What important life lessons did it teach me?" Then frame every negativity with these words: "In five years, will this matter?"

The Apostle Paul must have had that in mind as he wrote in Philippians 3:12, 13: "¹²Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect (**mature**): but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. ¹³Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, **forgetting those things which are behind**, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (*Emphasis added*)

To assess just how much the echoes of our past are disturbing our peace in the present, it is suggested that a "yes" or "no" answer format be used for the following questions. This list includes some questions from Philip Goldberg's books: *Making Peace* and *Making Peace with Your Parents*.

- ◆ Are you holding a grudge against someone who hurt you?
- ◆ Do you think "Oh no, here I go again!" when personal problems arise?
- ◆ Are you plagued by thoughts such as "*If only I'd...*" or "*I wish I didn't...*"?
- ◆ Are you ashamed of things you've done?
- ◆ Were you: abused physically, sexually or verbally; or abandoned as a child?

- ◆ Do you wish you could apologize to someone you have wronged and be forgiven?
- ◆ Do you often look back at your life and wonder what went wrong?
- ◆ Are you fearful of the future or do you feel anxious or depressed about it?
- ◆ In your mind, do you confront people from the past and finally tell them off?
- ◆ Do you replay old incidents and imagine better outcomes?
- ◆ Do you often feel like an innocent victim of fate?
- ◆ Does thinking about the “good old days” make you sad about the present?
- ◆ Are you still grieving the loss of a loved one?
- ◆ Does a voice in your head tell you you’re worthless, defective, despicable, or unlovable?
- ◆ Are you avoiding intimacy for fear of being hurt again?
- ◆ Do you harbor guilt, gripes, or grudges from a past relationship?
- ◆ Do you feel victimized by past experiences?
- ◆ Do you wish you could set the record straight—and finally be vindicated?
- ◆ Do you wonder why life hasn’t turned out the way you wanted?
- ◆ Do you seem to be less happy as time goes by?

The more “yes” your answers are; the more likely it is that old issues and traumatic incidents are jeopardizing your health. It is therefore all the more urgent to make peace with your past.

II. REACHING HIGHER

If you are afraid of the future because matters of the past keep surfacing, do not be distracted; there’s good news. The Lord has designed a master plan to get rid of your past. He wants you to drown your past in the waters of regeneration. He wants you to bring all of your hurts, habits and hang-ups and drown them in His presence. He wants you to cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you

(*cf.* 1Pe 5:7). Baptism was designed by the Creator to remove our past sins and to allow us to receive and walk in the new life.

The words of 2 Corinthians 5:17 are filled with optimism. They are also absolutely true and necessary: “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” In the baptismal waters of regeneration, God blots out our past: our past sins, our past failures, and our past mistakes. Our past is insignificant because Jehovah Tsidkenu—the Lord our Righteousness—has wiped your slate clean.

For that reason, Peter’s sermon pricked the hearts of the crowd on the Day of Pentecost, when their past came up to before them. In Acts chapter two, they cried out: What must we do to be saved? Peter uncondemningly answered: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (v. 38). Baptism was the culminating act of obedience for those three thousand and more souls after they heard and believed the gospel; repented of their wrongs; and confessed that Jesus is, in fact, the Christ. These believers were willing to make Christ the Lord of their lives by submitting to the command given by Peter to be baptized.

Baptism clearly washes away past sins (*cf.* Act 2:38; 22:16). Baptism places one in a relationship with Christ (Gal 3:26, 27), and the Lord adds the believer to the church of Christ (1Co 12:13). It’s no wonder then that Peter confirmed that baptism is “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (*cf.* 1Pe 3:21). Those on the Day of Pentecost were taught and baptized correctly because of the truth Peter presented. That is the mission of the church: to present the unadulterated truth—the gospel—which is able to save souls. As a result, upon conviction, one will indeed request baptism as the culminating act in God’s plan for man’s salvation. One cannot be taught wrong and baptized right or your conscience will bear ye witness (*cf.* 1Jo 3:20).

Baptism washes away past sins, but it does not prevent you from sinning. When one sins after being baptized in the blood of Christ, the believer is encouraged to come to repentance (2Pe 2:9); and make a public confession if Christ was brought to open shame. It is by the necessary steps of repentance and confession that we receive

forgiveness. John speaks to the saint with sinner problems in 1 John 1:6-9, where he stated:

“⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

We can't afford to let our past infect our present and sabotage our future. If we refuse to forsake, forgive and forget; we live in a sin-infected body that hinders our walk in the “Sonlight” and can never be healed. We waste precious time when we become absorbed with digging up bones, picking at scars and reliving old memories. Stop pursuing dead issues; admit them, quit them and forget them. Instead of struggling to change what you can't; let God's transforming power sweep through your life and sever the ties between you and all those tormenting thoughts and deeds from your past. *It's time to make peace with the past!* “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things that are not yet done” —Isa 46:9-10.

III. WORKING HARDER

Now is time to recommit to “*refresh*” your soul today. There are benefits of the refresh button on Internet browsers. The button is accessed when we desire to update or reload a web page. So it is when God purges our sins and refreshes our souls when we repent and confess. Moving forward to possess our possession and to march into our destiny requires a recommitment to refresh. When life's hardware seems to freeze or if the page you believe you should be on is not fully loaded, it may not be time to look for something new. Everything we need to move forward and rise above your present circumstances is already within us. Today is the day to hit the refresh button and reconnect with the God of power and comfort. Repentance and confession are the *refresh* buttons on the Christian journey.

The Christian journey is unlike any other journey we will ever embark upon. One of the resources God gives us for our journey comes in the form of our fellowmen. He sends people into our lives to help us to

spiritual maturity. People come into your life for a reason, a season or a lifetime. When you know which one it is, you will know whether they in your life to help you or you, them. Alvin C. Romer wrote “People Come Into Your Life for a Reason,” about which he said was a personal analogy on the cause and effect of true friendship based on an original idea by author, Jean Dominique Martin. From the excerpt, draw out all you can from it; it will bless your soul and, hopefully, you will never again look at people the old way:

When someone is in your life for a REASON, it is usually to meet a need you have expressed. They have come to assist you through a difficulty, to provide you with guidance and support, to aid you physically, emotionally or spiritually. They may seem like a godsend and they are. They are there for the reason you need them to be. Then, without any wrongdoing on your part or at an inconvenient time, this person will say or do something to bring the relationship to an end. Sometimes they die, or fade into anonymity. Sometimes circumstances dictate that they go in another direction leaving you to wonder; sometimes they walk away, uncaring and unwilling. Sometimes they act up and force you to take a stand, hoping that enmity hasn't reared its ugly head. What we must realize is that our need has been met, our desire fulfilled, their work is done. Reasons can go against you...but when it does, all you can do is assess it for what it's worth, monitor subsequent correspondences, make your decision and now it is time to move on.

Some people come into your life for a SEASON. They may only be there for a short period of time based on premeditated agendas; they may have motives that are not condoned by you, or because your turn has come to share with them in growing or learning new initiatives for the future. If all things are good, they may bring you an experience of peace, or make you laugh. They may introduce you to new routines and techniques that you have never experienced. They usually give you an unbelievable amount of joy. Believe it, it is real. But only for a season—they move on. Seasonal tidings with this situation usually deal with those that are going through changes, can't cope with certain situations that cause them to step outside of comfort zones, or are unwilling to take chances. Other seasonal fold readily recognizes their own kind, and will not hesitate to cut you loose.

LIFETIME relationships are harder to recognize for the moment, but with time can be the best choice you can make. But how many people do you know are willing to persevere for the long haul? Find one and I guarantee you will have him or her as someone trustworthy. Life timers teach you lifetime lessons, things you must build upon in order to have a solid emotional foundation. They accept you for what you are, do not prematurely judge you, do not have any inhibitions about taking chances for the betterment of the relationship, and surely feel that compatibility is something that is assessed as you go, not at the spur of the moment. They don't adhere to conditions and will be there during the zero hour. There's

GOT to be something that you can learn from this type of person. Your job is to accept the lesson, love the person, and put what you have learned to use in all other relationships and areas of your life. This is Agape Love at it's core..the type of love that God is. It is said that love is blind but friendship is clairvoyant. Silence doesn't suppose to be as ominous to cut deep like the sharpest knife. To be cut loose dangling trying to fathom how it went south is to understand that directional change does not have to be defined by ill winds and misplaced logic, but by common sense and discernable options working for the best. I thank all the people I've met in my lifetime who have lent me their ears, allowed me to belong, gave me love and let me love them back. I'm all the better because somewhere, somehow, and someone have given me hope that friendship is not fleeting, integrity is intrusive, and that good intent coupled with works can be a true embodiment of comraderie for as long as it is deemed necessary to embrace a true friend! And for those that I've called a friend at some point in my life, you will always be one...but know that you will not be forgotten.

IV. CONCLUSION

Above all, be encouraged by the fact that “God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we may ask or think” (Eph 3:21). The commentators call this verse a “super-superlative” (F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 70.) Paul’s reasoning: “(a) God is able to do all we ask him to do; (b) He is even able to do all that we dare not ask but merely imagine; (c) He can do more than this; (d) far more; (e) very far more!” God is well deserving of the “glory in the church” based on His power (1:19; 2:20), wisdom (3:10), mercy (2:4), love (2:4), grace (2:5-8), and so forth - manifested in the church which is the body of Christ (the exalted head). (Hendrickson, p. 175.) We are not able to understand God’s limitless power because of our limited minds. There is no danger of our asking God for too much. He is never out of power.

He is able to do vastly more than more.

When we call, He answers.

When we pray, He hears.

When we wait, He comes.

When we serve Him, He blesses us,

When we lean on Him, He sustains us!

He is able to do vastly more than more.

When we are empty, He fills us.

When we fall, He lifts us.

When we are lost, He finds us.

When we are sick, He heals us.

He is able to do vastly more than more!

DOING FINE IN 2009 * 8

Can you testify that you asked Him for *this* and He gave you *that*, and *then some*! You only hoped for *this* and He gave you *that*, and *then some*. You only dreamed of *this* and He gave you *that*, and *then some*!

If we are or plan to be “Doing Fine in 2009,” Heaven should be our goal and our ultimate desire to spend eternity with the all-powerful God, Who is able to do very far more than we even dare ask or imagine. Sing and be encouraged by verse four of the hymn *Amazing Grace*, written by John Newton:

*“When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we first begun.”*