

A Fresh Beginning

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 April 2024

Preacher: Sam Bunnell

[0 : 0 0] All right, would you take the Word of God with me and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We will read the theme verse for our new series this morning, verse 17, 2 Corinthians 5, 17.

So the theme for this new series is new life, a fresh beginning with Jesus. New life, a fresh beginning with Jesus.

I think it's very appropriate that we begin a series like this on this topic on the same day that we dedicate two new babies and we have two young people getting baptized.

And so I really had initially planned on just preaching this one sermon on this theme. And as I began to research and pray and study and put this sermon together, the Lord kind of showed me this is more than just one sermon.

This is a theme that I believe God has for us to dive into and study as a church. So new life, a fresh beginning with Jesus. Would you stand with me if you're able to?

[1 : 1 6] And let's read the Word of God together, 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17. I'm reading out of the Christian Standard Bible.

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. And see, the new has come.

Hold your finger there if you would and turn over to Romans chapter 6 and verse 4.

Or if you'd just like to look at the screen, that's fine as well. Romans 6, 4. We say something along those lines when we baptize on Sundays.

Just as Jesus was raised from the dead, we get to bring them up out of the water so they too can walk in new life.

[2 : 3 5] I believe that every one of us can be touched by this new life. Regardless of your age, your background, your current situation, we are all in need of a fresh beginning with Jesus.

Let's pray together. God, I pray that you would give us that fresh beginning starting this morning. I'm in need of it, Lord. Sometimes we wake up and the ground of our life feels dry and cracked and parched.

And we need an outpouring of your Spirit. God, we are thirsty for you. Pour out your water.

Pour out your Holy Spirit. Fill us. And give us that new, fresh beginning with you. We'll give you the glory. In Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated, church. I apologize for some of the formatting on the screens. This is not how it looked on my computer. But sometimes on my computer, it doesn't always translate that way to the screen.

[3 : 4 2] So I apologize for that. I'll try to get that fixed up before next Sunday. But this is the theme that I want to talk about this morning. We're not going to have the traditional point one, point two, but just kind of themes that I hope we can grasp and God can use to really touch your heart as he has mine on this.

A new thing. Do you see it? Would you turn with me to Isaiah chapter 43? Isaiah chapter 43. We're going to do a little bit of Old Testament flipping pages this morning.

So go to Isaiah chapter 43. And we're going to begin in verse 1. Give you a minute to get there.

Isaiah 43 and verse 1. Now this is what the Lord says. The one who created you.

And the one who formed you. So understand what's happening here. God reminding us who he is.

[4 : 56] The creator of all that is. The creator of us. The creator who formed us even before we had taken life and physical appearance. God knew us. He formed us.

He planned out our steps. So this is kind of the background for what we're talking about here. Now we're not going to take the time this morning. We don't have the kind of time to read through both chapters, Isaiah 43 and 44.

So we're just going to bounce through these chapters and really highlight the parts that are applying to what we're studying today. This is what the Lord says. The one who created you.

The one who formed you. Do not fear. For I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are mine.

Man, what an amazing promise and reminder that we belong to Jesus. Right? No matter what else is going on in your life, God says, it's okay because you are mine.

[5 : 55] Don't ever forget that, church. Over and over again, he calls us little children. That he is the father. And that special relationship, that special bond is there.

He says, you are mine. And then he says, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you. The rivers will not overwhelm you.

Jump down to verse 16. This is what the Lord says. Who makes a way in the sea and a path through the raging waters. Verse 18. Do not remember the past events.

Hold on a minute. What's he talking about? Pay no attention to things of old. How many of y'all are in the latter half of your life?

Whatever that looks like. We're not going to put a number on it, okay? You've got some things of old to look back on, don't you? I do, and I'd like to think I'm still in the first half of my life.

[6 : 59] We'll see. I don't know. I don't know how long God's going to let me live on this earth. Of course, we don't really know that. But some of us have a lot more things to look back on than others. So why is God telling us, do not remember the past events.

Pay no attention to things of old. Well, we've got to keep reading. If we stopped there, say, man, you need to move on and never remember anything that happened in the past.

Well, that's crazy, isn't it? So let's see what God means by this. Verse 19. Look, I am about to do something new. Something new.

Even now, it is coming. Do you not see it? Verse 19. Indeed, I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Now jump over to verse 20. Verse 20. Ready? I will make a way in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.

[8 : 08] I provide water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert. He says it twice. Verse 19.

And then again in verse 20. So he repeats himself. This is something we're supposed to pay attention to. This is something that's supposed to grab our attention. Ready? Verse, end of verse 20.

To give drink to my chosen people. I think that's a really, really important line. To give a drink to my chosen people.

You understand there are themes throughout scripture where God is compared to water. Most often the Holy Spirit is the member of our triune God, the Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Spirit all together as one God.

Most often the Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who is compared to water. So it's really interesting.

[9 : 10] It's interesting that way back here in the Old Testament, before we ever really get introduced to the Holy Spirit. Though there are certainly mentions of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

But Jesus, God the Father, has not yet sent down the Holy Spirit to be with us. That's something they were all looking forward to. But he gives little references.

He gives little peeks and glimpses of what's coming. He says, I will give a drink to my chosen people. The people I formed for myself will declare my praise.

Now, jump down to verse chapter 44. Chapter 44. Hang on. And verse 2.

This is the word of the Lord. Your maker. The one who formed you from the womb. Kind of begins similarly to how he did in chapter 43, right?

[10 : 09] Reminding you, this is the word from God. I'm the one who chose you. I'm the one who formed you. I'm your maker. He says, he will help you.

Verse 3. I will pour water on the thirsty land. Streams on the dry ground. I will pour out my spirit on your descendants.

Listen, church. And my blessing on your offspring. They will sprout among the grass. Like poplars, trees by flowing streams.

Do you understand what he's saying here? Look at that last verse again. Isaiah, every eye in the room if you can. There's Bibles in front of you.

Every eye in the room. Look on with somebody next to you. Here we go. It's kind of on the screen here. Isaiah 44 and verse 3. I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground.

[11 : 12] I will pour out my spirit on your descendants and my blessing on your offspring. You know what that looks like? That's what it looks like.

We just saw two more this morning. Can I tell you we've got about four more lined up for the next couple of months? Yeah. Yeah.

And they're not all children either. There's some teenagers jumping in. There's even adults starting to get involved. Say, you know what? I need to be baptized. God is doing something new.

That's why he says, don't look back at the past. Now, look back at the past to thank God for what he did back then. But don't keep looking back at the past and remembering the glory days of old and kind of wistfully thinking, man, I miss how it used to be.

No, no, no. God's saying, I'm going to do something new. I'm still alive. I'm still working. I'm still God. I'm still mighty. I'm still powerful.

[12 : 24] I'm still life changing. I'm still transformational. I am still great. I am still mighty. I am still greater than you. And there are still young people who are seeing that, whose eyes are being opened and saying, you know what?

Sign me up. I want to be one of God's children. And I want to get in the water like Jesus did and be baptized and testify to everybody that I have made the decision to follow Jesus.

That's what that looks like. He says, I'll pour out my spirit on your descendants. I'll pour out my blessing on your offspring.

Y'all, that's what that looks like. So, God's doing a new thing. The question is, do you see it? Do you see it?

John 4, 14. Whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him into eternal life.

[13 : 34] What an incredible thought. What an incredible picture of what God does for us. And we see that happening all around us. Man, if you've ever been thirsty and you went and got a big old glass of ice water, or maybe like my dad when he used to work on ranches from my grandfather years ago.

When he was growing up and he'd be riding fence line for all afternoon, the hot Texas summer. And then he would crack open a can of ice cold orange crush. And he's just like, man, I know it's not Gatorade.

I know it's not water. I know it's not supposed to be thirst quenching. But let me tell you, that was the most satisfying beverage I've ever had in my life when I was thirsty. That ice cold orange crush when you're out in the hot Texas summers.

If you've ever been so thirsty and you quenched your thirst, you know what that feeling is. And I can promise you, some of us in this room can testify there's an even greater feeling when you're spiritually dry, when you're spiritually thirsty, and then you taste the water that Jesus just described in John 4.

Whoever drinks from that water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. So the question for you is, are you thirsty?

[14 : 52] Are you thirsty? Do you need a drink? Do you need a drink from the well that Jesus promises? Do you need some of that water in your life? Are you thirsty? Jesus is the water.

He is the well. He is the water that will never run dry. You only get thirsty when you stop drinking that water. When you try to drink something else.

When you drink from the water that this world will give you. And man, it might taste good at first, but the aftertaste is the worst. That run, I didn't even plan that.

Isn't that true though? Man, Satan makes things look good. It might taste good at first. It might look good at first, but afterwards it's the worst, right?

It is. Man, when Jesus gives you something to drink, you don't have to go chase anything else. There's nothing else that satisfies.

[15 : 56] So I'm asking you, are you thirsty? God is doing something new. Isaiah 43 and 44 describe this beautiful picture.

And back then this was written for God's people Israel. But we understand now that there is no Jew or Gentile. There is no division between this anymore.

We have all been under the cross of Jesus Christ, grafted in, brought in to the same family of God. So now we don't have to just look at the Old Testament and say, well, that's not for us.

No, there's a reason God preserved his scriptures even into this church age. Where we gather together and we worship God. And man, God still loves his people of Israel.

And they're going through it right now, aren't they? Y'all aware of the attacks from Iran last night on the Israeli people? Well, I don't know the reported damage of that yet.

[16 : 59] I know the Iron Dome system worked to some extent to protect some of the people in Israel over there from those missiles.

But I hope you've already been praying for Israel. For all people over there that God would use this terrible conflict to be brought to him.

But certainly we read in scripture that God has a special place in his heart for the people of Israel. And while they are in duress, as they have been for most of their history, we definitely need to pray for them.

But as we read these prophecies, we read these promises, we read God's way of dealing with his people, we can then see God deals the same way with us.

His beloved children, who he has brought in together. And so it's not inappropriate for us to say, okay, God, God, my ground is dry.

[18 : 05] I need your water. I need your streams. I need your help. God, I'm thirsty. I see you working.

I see you moving. I see you pouring out your blessings on these generations coming up behind. I see the future laying out. But God, I don't want you to just put me out to pasture.

I want to be a part of it. Throughout the New Testament, we see a beautiful picture of the church where the older are teaching the younger, where the older and the younger are working in harmony with one another, where they are serving one another.

And it's not, hey, this was the old people's church and now it's the young people's church. No, it's all of our church together. But I can promise you that God will do something new. You can be part of it or you can miss it.

God's doing something new. Do you see it? And are you thirsty? Have you been going and living life and going through the motions and doing the things and coming to church?

[19 : 09] Maybe you come on Sunday morning. Maybe you attend the Sunday night Bible study. Maybe you attend the Wednesday night Bible study. Maybe you serve in the children's ministry. Maybe you're worn out because you had D-Now weekend not too long ago and you were serving in the youth ministry.

Whatever it is, whatever you've been doing, doing, doing for God and you've been trying to raise your children right and you've been trying to raise your grandchildren right, maybe that's your lot in life. Who knows what your situation is?

You've been trying to be kind. You've been trying to be nice. You've been trying to do all the things and you're just running on empty. Running on empty. And you're thirsty.

And God says, don't forget. I'm the water. You know the story of Mary and Martha, right? Jesus was there sitting in the room.

Martha was the busybody trying to get everything done on time. Be a good host. And Mary's just like, hey, this is Jesus. I'm going to go listen to him.

[20 : 10] I'm going to go hang out with him. He's kind of the big deal. In this situation. Don't miss that. Don't miss Jesus in your Christian life.

A fresh beginning with Jesus. Revelation 22 and verse 17 tells us this. Let the one who is thirsty come.

Let the one who comes drink from the water of life freely. That's the part that got cut off. Sorry about that. Let the one who is thirsty come.

And let anyone who comes drink from that water freely. Are you thirsty? Are you thirsty? So we're talking about new life.

A fresh beginning with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now I've told you, church, several times, that I strongly believe God has called our church into a season of prayer.

[21 : 12] The Sunday before Easter. The Sunday before Easter, we finished a series on the Lord's Prayer. The model prayer. And I believe that that is still applicable to what this new series is going to be about.

From the children who are still in this room. To the middle schoolers, the high schoolers.

The men, women, single, married. Parents. Grandparents. Widows.

Whatever your situation, your category is. We need you. This church needs you. I'm coming up on my one year anniversary here.

I told the search committee before they hired me that I really wanted to come in and learn. Learn the people. Learn the area. Learn the history of this church. Just learn the situation.

[22 : 18] And that's pretty much what I've spent my first year doing. Just learning all this. And after my first year, I still have a lot to learn. But I'll tell you this.

I've learned that every person in this church is vital to this church continuing. When somebody begins to disengage, we feel it.

You probably don't realize that. When you don't show up for a while, we miss you. When you're struggling, we all feel it.

And that's why this church is described as a family. It's why God's church is described as a family. We all need each other.

I believe that there are wonderful days ahead for our church.

[23 : 25] I believe that there's a generation of children and teenagers coming up who love Jesus. And they're getting saved.

And they're getting baptized. And they're coming to D now. And they're going off to college. And they're making friends in college who love the Lord.

And then they're bringing them back to serve in our D now. That's happening. There's incredible things happening in the life of our church right now.

Not back 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 40 years ago. God's doing things now. And it's not to my credit.

I haven't even been here long enough to take credit. Okay? I'm still just kind of going with what I was given, what I was handed, right? But God is working.

[24 : 29] And He's working through you. So I believe that for a church that's been around since 1876, we have the greatest future ahead of us that we could possibly ever imagine and that this church has ever seen.

Why is that? Because God is not in the business of declining. God is not in the business of getting worse. God wants to get better.

He's been bringing us step by step, stage by stage. And now He's got this group right here. And we're going to continue growing and doing better.

And by God's grace, we're not going to die. This church, by the grace of God, will not die.

We will continue. We will not just continue, but we will thrive. So I'm calling you to join me as we go with Jesus and have a fresh beginning in our church.

[25 : 41] New life for our church. And here's how it's going to work. Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest pastors this nation has ever seen, lived many, many years ago.

He said, when God is about to do a mighty new thing, He always sets His people praying. So church, that's what I'm calling you to do. All those people I mentioned just a moment ago, the singles, the marrieds, the old, the young, everybody in between, we need you to pray, to commit to praying, commit to praying for our church actively.

Man, you might say, you are way overestimating my commitment level to this church. Say, no, no, no, you're here this morning. You made it a priority enough to show up and be here with God's people, worshiping God and listening to His word preached.

So we need you too. Would you bow your heads right now with me? Let's start now. Let's start now. We need to pray. When God begins to do something new, He sets His people praying.

So church, right now, we're going to do that. Before we close, we're going to start praying. And then I'm going to ask each of you to commit to pray weekly for our church.

[27 : 00] Hey, I'd love it if you prayed daily, but I'm going to ask you to commit, to promise to pray weekly. What does that look like? You need to pick a day. You need to pick a day. You need to pick a time.

You need to put it on your calendar. I use my phone calendar. If you use your paper calendar, fine. Write a sticky note. Put it on your mirror. Whatever it takes. You need to pray. You need to pray.

Find a day once a week. Find a time on that day when nothing else is going to conflict. If you've got to get up a little early, if you've got to do it right before you go to bed, say, I'm going to pray for my church.

Y'all, I'm not demanding you do that. I'm asking. I'm asking you. And I believe the more people, the more of God's people that we have praying for this church, the more God's going to move.

You heard from the search committee this morning. We want the right person here. We want somebody helping us in the area of youth and worship. We want to see our church brought to where God wants it to be, not where we want it to be.

[28 : 03] So to see that happen, we've got to pray. Bow your heads with me if you would. God, we pray right now. I don't want to ignore what you're doing.

Just about every week, there's people coming up saying, I gave my life to Jesus. Saying, I want to be baptized. There is evidence of you working, Lord.

This is not just the same old every week. This is not just the same old that it's always been. You're doing something. You're doing something new. And we would be wrong to ignore it.

So God, teach us to pray. Teach us to come to you and say, God, we need you to do this. If we jump in and try to manage this and figure it all out, we're going to mess it up.

But God, you need to step in. And you need to lead us. And you need to show us what we need to do. God, we've got all these young people getting baptized. We need to get them into discipleship programs that teach them what it means to be a follower of Jesus, not just dunk them in the water and then send them on their way.

[29 : 14] God, there's so much. This is all so much bigger than we as a church can handle. Everybody's got their families. Everybody's got their jobs.

Everybody's got their busy life happening. And yet, you've called us together into this church. It's supposed to be a light.

It's supposed to have an impact. And it is having an impact. But God, it's bigger than us. You're doing a new thing, and it can be a little scary.

It can be a little different. The church 10 years from now in Henrietta might look a little different than it did 10 years ago. But we want it to look like what you have for it.

Your will, not ours. So God, give everyone right now, every head in this room that's bowed, every mind that's thinking about you, thinking about your spirit speaking to them.

[30 : 23] And God, show each person the day, the time, when they will commit to pray for this church. Specifically, to pray that we would love God, that we would seek truth, and that we would serve people together.

Specifically pray that we would be the church that you want, not the church that we want. Specifically pray that God would use me.

Not just me, Pastor Sam, but me, every person in this room. Pray individually that, God, how can you use me to make a difference for your glory in this church?

God, I want to be a part of something new. I don't want to be sitting on the sidelines. I don't want to be just thinking about the past. I want to be a part of the present and the future.

Wherever you send off these young people, I know some of them will maybe go off to college and come back to Henrietta. I don't know what your plans are for these young people, but God, wherever you send them, let their lives be impacted, and let them make a massive difference wherever they go because of what you did in their lives in this church.

[31 : 42] church, we'll give you the glory for it. Church, with your heads bowed, are you willing to slip your hand up and say, I'm going to commit to a day and a time, you don't have to tell me right now, but I'm going to commit to a day and a time to pray for our church every week.

Would you slip your hand up now? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Hands all across the room. That's between you and God. I urge you to find an accountability partner if you want to tell me when that time is.

You want to tell your spouse, a friend, whoever it is, and just remind me, remind me, set an alarm on your phone, whatever it takes. Remind me to pray because prayer is the key.

Prayer is so important. God, do something in our church and start right now. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you need to do business with God this morning, they're going to come lead a verse of a song, but if you need to do business with God, you can come down here.

You can come down and talk to me. You can slip off to the back. Whatever you need to do to pray over whatever God is working in your heart, you need to give your life to Jesus, as some of these young people have.

[32 : 48] You say, I know I'm a sinner, but I've never put my faith in Jesus, and I want to do that today. Then come down and talk to me. I'd love to have that conversation with you. But this is the time to have a moment with God and do business with Him.

So take advantage of this time now. Amen.