**IN ORDER TO GO FORWARD WE MUST LOOK BACK**

***Written by: Tommy Romans January 2024***

I know you have heard the saying – “Out with the Old and in with the New!” We have now left the year 2023 behind us and the door has been closed. We have now entered the Door of 2024. We do not know what this New Year will hold, but rest assured it is already marked in God’s big Calendar Book. By the signs of the time, this could very well be the year of the Trumpet sound, Jesus’ coming is on us, right at our door!! Lift up your heads children, look up – Our Redemption draweth nigh, He is coming in Glory Bright, you can feel it in the air, it is GO HOME TIME!! But should our Lord tarry a little longer to get our loved ones in, God wants you to know that He sees all that is coming into this new year and what it will hold! The Lord wants you to take heart and know that He sees you, His eyes are upon the Church and He is going to take care of His children!! He kept you through ’23 and He is going with you in ’24.

Did you know there are times in our life that in order to GO FORWARD, we must reflect Back? Many things happen to us and we do not realize it at the time, but they are Stepping Stones to help us go forward! We do not see it at the time, but our trials when we come through them, are “Stepping Stones of Faith” that put within us a confidence and an assurance that keeps us going on for the Lord!

I have crossed many streams in my life. I have come to many rough places of raging waters that I thought within myself – will I make it, can I get over this? The place I longed to be, the place I wanted to go was across on the other side! Do you know how I made it without going down in the cold waters and being swept away and drowning? It’s because I had a made up mind and a deep spiritual desire in my heart to go forward and I put my faith and trust in the Lord and He took me through and over!

LOOKING BACK ON 2023

 Looking back on last year of 2023, I believe we all can say to some degree that it has been a “Trying year.” We have had our share of battles, we have all struggled with something! Afflictions have come and with it worries & fears; cares and questions. Our faith has been tested and tried. Our enemy the devil has hit and fought the minds of some of us so hard at times that we wondered and questioned – God, what is happening? Why Lord? Will I (will we) get through this and make it? Will I ever feel God again and sing Victory song? Will the Lord move on this situation and problem? But you didn’t quit or give up but pressed and held on and kept going when you didn’t feel like it! There was an unseen presence with you, a power that kept you.

 Can I ask you - Who brought you through the trying 12 months of last year? Who’s hand touched you and helped you? It is the Lord who called you and saved you that has kept you! Can I say at this present time you are still here by the Grace of God?! He has brought you a mighty long way and He is not through. It’s not over!! When the enemy said you were going down and wasn’t going to make it, God lifted you up and carried you. BLESS HIS HOLY NAME! Looking back on 2023 – that same merciful hand that brought you through all of last year is that same eternal hand that is with you as you enter this new year of ’24. The God of your yesteryear is your same God today and tomorrow!

**Mal 3:6** - For I am the LORD, I change not;

**Deut. 2:7** – God spoke to Israel His people before they entered the Promise Land – “For the LORD knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.” God was telling His people – I’ve been with you the whole journey, the whole way through the wilderness and I never left you! I never let you starve or go hungry.

I’d like to tell those of you reading this, God has been with you the whole time even when you didn’t think He was! He’s been there when you couldn’t feel it or see it – He was there all the time!

The Lord God of the Bible whom we serve is called:

**El-Roi** – His name in Hebrew means – The God who sees me! **He is:**

**Yahweh** – I AM the I AM, the eternal Self-Existing One who has no beginning and no end – He says “I’ve always been and I will always be. God called Moses at the burning bush and sent him – “Go tell my children in Egypt – YOU’RE COMING OUT!!” **He is**:

**El-Shaddai** – “The Mighty All Sufficient One who makes Covenant. I Am more than enough for your every need! I do not Fail” **He is:**

**Jehovah Jireh** – I Am the Lord – I WILL PROVIDE!

 If you link these 4 names of God in the original Hebrew manuscripts, God is saying to you right now – “I Am the Great I Am who never changes. I see you and I KNOW you. You are mine. I have given you my Word and my Promises that I WILL NOT FAIL - I Will Provide for you!!”

KING SOLOMON’S PRAYER

**I Kings 8** - At the dedication of the newly built Temple, the place of worship that Solomon had built for the Lord, Solomon stood before the Altar in the presence of all the congregation and spread his hands toward heaven and prayed, saying – Lord God, there is no God like thee, **who keepest** covenant and mercy with your servants. During that long prayer, he had fallen down on his knees and earnestly entreated God for His people Israel. **Vs. 54** And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.

 **55** And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying,

 **56** Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there **hath not failed one word** of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.

 Ohhh that we would Praise the Lord for His Goodness, Praise Him for His wonderful works and His kindness toward us!! Do you know that God is Faithful even when we are not? He always KEEPS His Word! Can you look back on your life and see how God has moved in times past? Had it not been for the Lord you and I would not be here right now! Let’s ask the psalmist David:

TELL US DAVID ABOUT GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

 Tell us dear Psalmist – Is God faithful? David would say to us – “As I look back over my life, I can tell you that I have had my ups and downs; I have had my victories but I have also known and suffered defeats; I’ve had my weaknesses and faults and I know at times I let up, missed God and messed up, but I had a Heart for God, I never lost my Love and desire for Him!! I can tell you that through it ALL, God Never Failed me, Hallelujah, He was there all the time, His compassions fail not; I have seen His precious hand move for me, I have experienced His mercy, He never left me, He saw me through all the years of my life till He called me Home – My God has been GOOD!! Glory to His name!!”

I want you all to notice with me the very specific words David uses in these verses that he wrote for us, as he is speaking in the past tense how God took care of him in his yesteryears.

**Ps 27:1** The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? **9** - Thou **hast been** my Help**!**

**Ps 61:3** For thou **hast been** a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. **4** I will abide in thy tabernacle forever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings.

 What are you saying David? GOD HAS **BEEN** good to me! He’s kept me, He’s **been** (past tense) my Shelter, my refuge and I am going to keep on serving Him and staying in Church and abiding in His presence!

**Ps 59:16** (Looking back over his life) he says - But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou **hast been** my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

 **17** Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.

Come on children and sing unto the Lord and praise Him from whom all blessings flow! Don’t let the devil steal your song. Praising God for what He’s already done will brighten your outlook on your future and it will cause the Lord to do more for you!!

This year 2024 can be your greatest year! Let’s go beyond the vail into God’s presence! Let’s be filled with His power. Show us Lord your Glory like we’ve never seen before this year!! Did you know that if we are to get excited as we look in anticipation of what God will do – then we must be excited and praise Him for what He’s already done!!! You must think back on your past victories and blessings in order to go forward – They are your Stepping Stones of Faith!! GOD HAS NOT CHANGED!

Tell us more Psalmist David as you look back over your life in serving God! He will tell you: - The Lord liveth; blessed be the Rock of my Salvation. Thou **hast** brought me (past tense – He’s already done it) brought me forth also into a large place and delivered me. **Thou** **hast** smitten my enemies and **hast** enlarged me when I was in distress. **Thou** **hast** maintained my right and my cause! (Lord, you stood for me when nobody else would). **Thou** **hast** enlarged my steps under me that my feet did not slip. (Lord, you’re the One that held me up when it looked like I was going down and the enemy tried to make me fall. God, it is you that **have kept** me and brought me a long way.)

**Ps 71:5** For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth.

 **6** By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee.

 **8** Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day.

(From a child O Lord, you’ve been with me!)

**Ps 27:9** Thou **hast been** my help!

**Ps 30:1** I will extol thee, O LORD; for **thou hast** lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. (I can’t tell you my dear readers how many times the Lord has lifted me up! If God be for us, who can be against us?)

**Ps 40:5** Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which **thou hast done**, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

This is enough to make you want to lift your hands right now and Praise the Lord for all He **has done** and what He **has** brought you through!! GLORY TO GOD!

THE EBENEZER STONE

 Remember, I said that in order to go forward in this new year, we must recall to memory God’s faithfulness in our past, the times He has moved and touched and answered prayer!! Had it not been for the Lord, the enemy would have swallowed us up!

 Over Thirty one hundred (3,100) years ago in the time of the prophet Samuel, God’s people Israel were being hounded and threatened by their chief enemies, the Philistines. Israel was in a hard place and they got tired of being defeated and harassed by the devil and they cried for Samuel to pray for them. Pray for us O Man of God!

Samuel told all the people to put away the strange gods and to repent and return unto the Lord. The people repented, saying – Lord, we have sinned and they turned their back on Baal and Ashtaroth. They fasted as Samuel took a sucking Lamb and offered it up in the fire as a sacrifice to the Lord. As Samuel was offering the LAMB, the Philistines drew near to attack God’s people Israel. (Hey devil, ain’t you got any sense? Don’t you know it’s the wrong time to come against God’s people when they are praying and giving their sacrifice to the Lord!) While Samuel prayed and called on God as the Blood flowed from the body of the Lamb, the Philistines drew near to attack and God thundered with a great thunder upon them and they were smitten.

**1Sam. 7:12** Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto **hath** the LORD helped us. **13** So the Philistines were subdued!

That big large stone that Samuel erected was a memorial stone of “Remembrance” that when Israel hereafter would pass by it, they would recall to memory how God had moved and delivered them!

**EBENEZER** means the Memorial Stone of Help – God came and Helped us!

Look now at the Word “**Hitherto**.” It means – up to this point of time – God has Helped us!! In our vernacular today, we could say – “All the way till now – the whole way till right now – My God has Helped me!!” Lord, you have been with me the whole time even when I didn’t even know it, but you were waiting on me to Call on You. I must obey and trust in You.

LOOKING FORWARD: **Ps 31:19** ¶ Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

David was speaking of himself in talking to the Lord in **Ps. 21** I shall joy in thy strength O Lord and in thy Salvation how greatly shall I rejoice! (Why are you going to Rejoice David?) **Vs 3**  For thou Preventest me with the Blessings of Goodness. (**Preventest** in the Hebrew means that God goes before us and lays up Blessings in our path as we **Go Forward!)** But we MUST GO forward! We will never see the Hand of God move for us if we halt and stay back and not move!!

What I say unto one, I say to you all – You got to move and Go Forward this year! I feel like in the Spirit that it is going to be a pivotal year and we CANNOT linger – the Lord is calling and beckoning to His Church and we cannot afford to be left behind. As the Angel of the Lord that came to Peter when he was in his prison and smote him on his side and said to him “Arise up quickly, gird thyself and bind on thy sandals and follow me,” The Holy Ghost is nudging the Bride of Christ to arouse, get your lamps trimmed and burning bright! It’s time to get renewed, get the oil, be filled with the Spirit, The Bridegroom Jesus is COMING, the signs are all around us, do not tarry, you got to move – The Holy Ghost is saying – **Go Forward!** Let 2024 be your best year in the Lord, a year of Revival, a Year of Restoring, Refilling and Renewing!! Let this be your prayer and battle cry –

“MORE OF THE LORD IN 2024”

MAY GOD BLESS EACH OF YOU IN

HIS ABUNDANT GRACE!