

**A New Past**  
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We are in a new sermon series entitled All Things New. It's based on Revelation 21:3 where God says, "*Behold, I make all things new.*"

Last week I taught on how God can make you new. As I prayed about what to preach this week I was surprised when He gave me this sermon title: A New Past. I thought, "Now wait a minute. Last week I preached on how we cannot change our pasts. What's done is done."

But I felt the Lord telling me, "You can't change your past – but you can change what you believe about your past and what you tell yourself about your past. You can receive My forgiveness for what you've done in the past and forgive those who've hurt you in the past and when you do that, your past will be made new."

You see, all of us are impacted by our pasts, but some of us are incapacitated by our pasts. So, today I am challenging you to stop torturing yourself about what you did or didn't do in the past! Stop being chained to past failure.

Listen closely – when your past is still harming you or holding you back in the present – it's really not the past, is it? It's the present. And if you don't deal with it properly and biblically – it will be your future!

There are five keys to a new past that I want to preach on today.

**1- To have a new past - Receive God's Forgiveness**

I'm not going to preach very much on this today because I covered it last week. Let me just remind you of 2 Corinthians 5:17 –

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

When we are born again we are a totally brand-new creation in Christ! The old has gone and the new has come! *Some of you are weighed down with guilt and condemnation for things you've done in the past. But, Christ has already paid for every sin you have ever or will ever commit. 1 John 1:9 says:*

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

You must choose to believe that instead of believing what you tell yourself or what Satan tells you.

## **2- To have a new past - Resist the enemy in Jesus' name!**

Never forget whom the battle is with! Ephesians 6:12 says:

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*

Our battle is not with our spouse or our boss or our children! Our struggle is with demonic forces who want to try to take authority over us and our families. If you forget who you are fighting with – you will end up fighting against your family rather than fighting for your family!

Yes, you need to deal with bad behavior, but if you never deal with the root cause driving the behavior, you'll never get true and lasting victory. In Luke 10:19 Jesus said:

*I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy.*

We must realize that there's a difference between power and authority. Power is strength or the physical ability to act. Authority is the legal right to make others obey.

Listen! You are a child of the Most High God. And demons must obey the authority of every child of God who speaks the Word of God in the name of Jesus! You don't have to be strong or spiritual or go to seminary or know a whole lot. You just need to act on the authority you have in the name of Jesus.

If you can get this down - it will set you free from thinking you have to be strong enough or good enough to overcome the enemy.  
 You'll never be strong enough or good enough!  
 It's not about that kind of power – it's about authority.  
 And the Bible says authority trumps power!  
 You don't have to be stronger than the devil.  
 You have authority over him in the name of Jesus.

So, when Satan comes to you bringing up your past – trying to condemn you – you must speak out loud the word of God which says in Romans 8:1

*Now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.*

Now – you will only have authority to the level you believe God's word! You must come to the place of believing what God says over what you say or what the enemy says!

Not every thought that comes into your mind is of God!  
 That's why you can't believe everything you think!

Satan knows that if he can seize control of your thought life, he can seize control of the rest of your life.

That's why Proverbs 23:7 says that *as a man thinks in his heart, so is he*. Your behavior is based on your beliefs! That's why you must take your thoughts captive – rather than be a captive to your thoughts! That's why:

### **3- To have a new past - Renew your mind with the Word of God**

Romans 12:2 says:

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

If you are going to have a new past – you must renew your mind about your past. We do that by reading the word of God to discover who He is in us and what He's done for us. We are transformed when we realize the magnitude of His grace and salvation and forgiveness!

To renew our minds we must recognize thoughts that are not from God. Then we must resist those thoughts and replace them with the truth of God's word. You renew your mind by choosing to believe God's word over Satan's words or your feelings or your circumstances.

Satan wants you to doubt your beliefs and believe your doubts!  
Satan wants you to question God's answers!  
Satan wants to conform us through his words.  
But God wants to transform us through His Word.

You see, all of us have internal self-talk going on all the time. It's what we tell ourselves about ourselves, about God, about others, about the things that have happened to us or the things we've done. We must pay attention to those words to see if we are telling ourselves the truth about ourselves and about our pasts.

Here's what I mean. Many of us have had bad things happen to us in the past. Maybe your parents divorced when you were young and you told yourself it was your fault. You made that wrong judgment as a child and you still believe it today.

Or maybe someone abused you in some way and you saw it as your fault and you believed you were somehow defective. You made that wrong judgment as a child and you still believe it today. And you've continued in that cycle of abuse or you've become an abuser.

Our personal issues are prolonged and allowed to continue to wreak havoc in our lives until we deal with them maturely and biblically.

Many of us are haunted by memories that we are still reliving and seeing through the eyes of a child – rather than going back to look at those events from an adult perspective and renewing your mind about what you believe.

For instance – take the example of parents divorcing and a child taking on the responsibility and blame for it. Here’s how you reframe it and tell yourself the truth:

- Your parents had their own issues that they could not resolve.
- It was your parents’ decision to divorce.
- It was not about you – you were an innocent victim of their choice.

When you see and believe that – you can set yourself free from that past pain by telling yourself the truth, forgiving your parents, and stop blaming yourself. That results in a new past.

I know this isn’t easy – but it’s necessary. 1 Corinthians 13:11 says:

*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

We all have childish thoughts, childish reasoning and childish talk. Those things will not just go away as you grow up. You must put them away!

Put away means to make entirely useless, inactive and inoperative – to destroy, do away with, make of no effect, stop, put an end to, bring to nothing, to unemploy.

This requires effort.

It does not mean to ignore childish things or pretend they’re not there.

It does not mean you will automatically grow out of it.

In fact, the meaning here is that childish things will not go away on their own! They must be put away.

So, how do we put them away? By recognizing childish ways of thinking or behaving in yourself – then replacing them with God’s truth and godliness.

1 Corinthians 14:20 says:

*Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.*

One of the ways that past pain affects us today is that we make inner vows to protect ourselves. That’s why:

#### **4- To have a new past – renounce inner vows**

An inner vow is a pledge we make to ourselves in response to something someone else did to us.

Inner vows are based on judgments we make against parents or teachers or authority figures or someone else who hurt us in some way.

We are not always conscious of inner vows, but they bind us to a mind set and a way of acting that builds walls to keep people out – yet at the same time opens the door to the devil. You see – here’s the insidious nature of an inner vow – the very thing we judge someone else for comes on us! The New Living Translation of Luke 6:37 says-

*Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you.*

You reap what you sow. What you dish out will be dished back to you!

When we are hurt by someone, we either forgive them or we judge them. If we forgive we are free – but if we judge we usually make an inner vow that turns into resentment and bitterness and self-destructive behavior.

And there is power in that vow - power that is based on the strength of the flesh, not the power of the spirit.

Here are some examples of common inner vows:

- I will never get angry like my dad!
- I'll get mom back for doing that!
- I will never marry a man like my father.
- I will never marry a woman like my mother.
- When I become a parent I'll never allow that in my house.
- I'll never trust anyone
- I'll never let anyone see who I really am
- I'll never let anyone get close enough to hurt me
- I'll never let someone control me

Inner vows usually start with the words, “I’ll never” or “I’ll always.”

Think of the example of a father who is a very angry man. His anger is taken out on his wife and children. That can result in children hating their father and judging him. At some point the child - let’s call him John - says to himself, “I am never going to be like my father.” John just made an inner vow which plants a bitter root inside of him that can produce bad fruit in his life.

What will likely happen in adult life is that John will usually not get angry, because the Inner Vow represses his anger. But this vow was made in the flesh and every now and then John will explode in a fit of rage, and those around him will be wounded. Afterwards John will realize, “I’m just like my father!” John hates it, but he is powerless to change it. That’s because an inner vow can cause you to become what you judged in someone else.

Here's another way an inner vow can impact you: Some women say they will never marry a man like their father, but a lot of women wind up with husbands just like their father. Or, they steer clear of any man who is anything like their father. He might even have the good characteristics of their father. But because of their inner vow, the fact that he reminds her of dad at all causes her to miss out on a good thing! If she's going to find the right man, that inner vow must be broken.

A boy may fall down and hurt himself and start crying. His father says, "Get up and stop your crying. Boys don't cry. Be a man!" So, he gets up and vows to never cry again. And he goes through life an emotional invalid – unable to express any emotions or show any compassion. If he's going to be emotionally mature, that inner vow must be broken.

When he gets married, he's distant and unemotional with his wife. She tries to get him to open up, but his inner vow hinders his ability to do so. In order for their relationship to work, that inner vow must be broken.

There are personal commitments we can and should make – but inner vows based on judgment are vows you must break. But it's not always easy because we're not always aware of them.

Here's what to look for to identify a bitter root and an inner vow:  
 Are there judgments you've made that contain the words always or never?  
 Are you locked into a pattern of bad behavior you can't break out of?  
 Do you react to certain behaviors and you don't know why?  
 These things can be indicators of inner vows and judgments.

When we make those vows we are taking our lives into our own hands. At the root of inner vows is judgment: judging people who harmed us and – worse of all – judging God who we believe did not protect us!

So, if God didn't protect us, we'll protect ourselves.  
 If God didn't take care of us, we'll take care of ourselves.  
 When we make an inner vow, we are usurping the role of God in our lives!

So - how do you break the power of an inner vow?  
 Choose to forgive the wrong who wronged you.  
 Confess your sin of judging and receive the forgiveness of God.  
 Renounce the inner vow: "In the Name of Jesus, I renounce every inner vow I've ever made. Lord, I ask You to set me free from every vow and every curse that has resulted from it."

There are two other things we must do in order to have a new past. We find those things in Philippians 3:13-14

*Brothers, 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, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

## **5- Focus on the Future and Forget the Past**

Please understand that you can't move forward by looking backwards. What's in front of you is more important than what's behind you. That's why your car has a huge windshield and a small rear-view mirror.

It's the same way in life. What's in front of you is more important than what's behind you. If you're going to advance in life, you must spend much more time looking through the windshield at your future than through the small mirror at your past.

Yes, there are things in our past we must deal with and overcome. But to make progress, we need to mainly look forward. To move forward you must concentrate more on your future than your past. We must not allow any excuse, any person, any circumstance or any devil in hell to hold us back from our destiny.

Everything's gonna work out in the end – so if there's still some things that need to be worked out – you're not at the end yet! So press on!

Focus on the future and forget the past. There are different Greek words in the Bible that are translated "forget." One means to put something totally out of your mind. That's not the word used here. And I'm glad for that because you cannot just hit a "delete" key in your mind and have every memory erased. This word "forget" means "to neglect; to be unconcerned about; to stop recalling information; to no longer care for."

Now – the Bible says there are some things we need to remember. Remember the goodness, the blessings, and the promise of God. But there are some things we need to forget.

Some of you are remembering the wrong things – there are wounds, wrongs, failures and sins that you keep alive by constantly recalling and caring for. You are constantly nursing wounds and recounting wrongs. That will keep you stuck! Yes, we should learn from our past, but we should not be limited by our past.

So, forget the things that cause you guilt and despair and condemnation. Forget the failure that paralyzes you. Forget the wounds from other people – forgive them and let it go.

I challenge you to resolve to put the past behind you. God does not want you to live your life imprisoned by your past.

So, don't allow anything from your past to hold you back from your God-given destiny.

You may have been raised dirt poor, but that should not hold you back.  
Gideon was poor, but he had a destiny to lead the people of God.

People may have wronged you or turned against you, but that should not hold you back. Joseph was hated by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused and thrown into prison. Yet he resolutely held onto his promise from God and God elevated him from the prison to the palace.

Yes, you have sinned in life – but that should not hold you back.  
What you've done in the past is over and done and under the blood!  
Your past is forgiven! Your future is bright!  
God has plans for you that are good and not evil!  
Plans to give you a future and a hope!  
God is working all things out for your good!  
Even what the enemy means for your harm God will turn to good!