

**Remnant Life Church**  
January 1, 2017  
**A Clean Start-A New At-Bat**  
*Philippians 3:7-14*

- Announcers will often state, “It’s a clean start” at the beginning of a race (Olympics)
  - That means that no one jumped the gun
  - The race is official
- There is an old story about a young boy who walks out into a field alone carrying a baseball in one hand and his brand-new bat in the other. His face bears a look of tremendous confidence. Cocking his bat, he tosses the ball into the air, and yells, “I’m the greatest hitter in the world!” Then he swings, he misses and calls out, “Strike one.” He picks up the ball, examines it, & then throws it into the air again. As he swings, he yells, “I’m the greatest hitter in the world.” Once again, he misses. “Strike two,” he says. This time, he examines the bat carefully to make sure there isn’t anything wrong with it, picks up the ball, adjusts his cap, & tosses the ball into the air for the 3rd time. He repeats with great confidence, “I’m the greatest hitter in the world,” and swings with all his might missing for the 3rd straight time. He looks down at the ball for a moment and then suddenly proclaims, “Wow! Struck him out on 3 perfect strikes! I’m the greatest pitcher in the world!”
- Perspective and point of view certainly play a role in how we see the things that happen in our lives but at the end of a year we should ask ourselves did I spend more time as a hitter or a pitcher?
- This morning, the first day of a new year, we are all in the starting blocks and all in the batter’s box looking out at 2017
  - Like in a race a good, clean start is vital to how well you do and even how well you finish
  - And like each at-bat we are faced with brand-new opportunities

**READ – Phil 3:7-14**

- Paul does 2 things here
  - Calls for the Christian to understand that God is the source of our lives
  - The importance of pressing on toward the goal of a complete life in Christ
- With Paul’s words in mind, before we come to the communion table, three things for us to consider as we live our lives for Christ moving into the new year -

**1. Recognize the value of time**

- a. At the outset of creation God established the existence and parameters of time
  - i. **Gen 1:3-5** - *And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.*
  - ii. God also created time to be linear – in other words once it is passed it is done
  - iii. No matter what you do, how you feel, what you think, you cannot go back one second

- iv. While God created time, we are the ones who have become slaves to it
- v. God does not view time as we do
  - 1. Now and suddenly and very soon are words we should use with caution
  - 2. Length of time is neither good nor bad only what is His will
- b. Time does not change but we do and as we grow older we appreciate and understand it more
- c. Each of us is given a finite amount of time known only to God
- d. Valuing the time God has given us means several things:
  - i. Not wasting it – this is not about being busy rather using it wisely including the wisdom of doing nothing
  - ii. Enjoy the time you are given
  - iii. Too many of us spend an inordinate amount of time looking ahead so much so that we miss what is happening right now, right in front of us.
  - iv. Give your full attention to what God is doing in your life right now

## 2. Do not live in bondage to the past

- a. God gave us a memory but it must be kept in check through the controlling of our minds and our will (I Cor 7:37)
- b. Memories are either pleasant or they are difficult but spending time reflecting on either has absolutely no bearing on what happened or can change one second of it
- c. The only thing you can control is how much time you spend dwelling on each
- d. Why choose to dwell on the negative things of the past?
  - i. Phil 3:13 – Paul says “*forgetting what is behind*”
  - ii. Paul certainly had a great deal of the negative that he could have dwelt on (2 Cor.11:24-26)
  - iii. Paul knew that what God was doing in his life was not behind him but ahead
  - iv. So it is for each of us – learn from the past but do not dwell there

## 3. Take the time to re-examine the priorities in your life

- a. Many use the new year to start new things
  - i. Physically - the gyms will be packed for the next several weeks
  - ii. Mentally – Barnes & Noble will do a brisk business with people committed to reading more in the new year
  - iii. Spiritually – churches often see a uptick in attendance
- b. One of the best start to a new year is examining your own life to determine, honestly, how you lived this past year
  - i. What has proven to be most important to you the past 12 months?
  - ii. What does that mean?
    - 1. Where did you spend your time?
    - 2. Where did you spend your energy?
    - 3. Where did you spend your money?
  - iii. You can list your priorities verbally but it is what you do that proves it

iv. We must put things in right priority as God's children

4. A while back a professor of religion was speaking to a group of seminary students. After lecturing to them for a while, he said, "Okay, it's time for a quiz." He set a one-gallon, wide mouthed jar on the table in front of him. Then he took out a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them inside one at a time. When no more rocks would fit, he asked, "Alright, here is the quiz question - is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes." "Really?" he said. Then he reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. He dumped some gravel into the jar & shook it, causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. Then he smiled and asked the group once more, "Is this jar full?" By this time the class was beginning to reconsider their earlier answer. "Probably not," one of them said. "Good!" he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it filled all the spaces between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked, "Is this jar full?" "No!" the class said. "Good!" he replied. Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour until the jar was filled to the brim. He looked up at his students and asked, "So, what was the point of this illustration?" One seemingly hyper student raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really, really hard, you can always fit something more into it!" "No," the speaker laughed, "that is not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is simply this: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all.

- What are your big rocks and are you giving them the attention they need?
- Where is God in your jar? Your family? Your health?
- Is there more sand in your jar than rocks and what do you need to do about that in the year to come?
  - We can often become so focused on the sand and gravel of our lives that we ignore the big rocks that should be getting the most attention
- The rock passage...
- **Prov 3:3-12** *Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.*
- As we come to the communion table this morning...