

Remnant Life Church  
January 2, 2022  
Look Ahead and Don't Look Back  
Daniel 1:1-7; Romans 5:1-8

Six years ago, I shared the top 10 list of New Year's Resolutions

- When I was exploring those lists again, I discovered that they really had not changed much from then until now

Top 10 list of NYR from 2015:

10. Spend more time with family
  9. Fall in love
  8. Help others with their dreams
  7. Quit smoking
  6. Learn something exciting
  5. Stay fit and healthy
  4. Enjoy life to the fullest
  3. Spend less, save more
  2. Get organized
  1. Lose weight
- The first question I would like to ask on this, the first Sunday of 2022 is, are you looking ahead to the opportunities God is going to provide or are you looking back at the times of adversity and difficulty?
    - Most people would feel justified in looking back given what has transpired in 2021
    - I recently read, "I'm not wishing anyone a Happy New Year until I read the terms and conditions"
    - Not only were things difficult they are in some ways getting a little worse
    - Does that give you the reason, the license, to only focus on the negative or is there reason to live, dare I say, in joyful anticipation because of Jesus Christ?

Daniel is an excellent model for how we should be looking ahead, not back, to this coming year

**READ – Dan 1:1-7**

- What do we know of him according to the first seven verses of the first chapter of Daniel?
  - He lived the life of privilege as a part of the nobility of the kingdom
  - He was highly intelligent
  - He was diligent in his work and would certainly have accomplished a great many things as a young man
  - He was handsome, physically fit, and gifted in all types of learning
  - He was not only a teacher's dream but a coach's dream as well
- He was in the elite class; related to the king of Judah
  - He would have been raised in wealth, power, and education

- He probably hob-knobbed with the kings and dignitaries of the day
- He enjoyed servants who saw to his every wish
- With all that he had he would have been a mother-in-law's dream
- Yet with all that he had he was a man of character, faith, and humility who refused to compromise and was in every way committed to serving God.

But Daniel, with all that he had going for him, was caught in a land and culture that had forgotten God

- God had repeatedly sent prophets to warn the people of Israel against their sin and rebellion; but they refused to repent and change
- And so, in 605 BC God allowed the superpower of the day, the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar, to attack and conquer Jerusalem
  - When Nebuchadnezzar had completed his conquest, he set up a puppet government under King Jehoiakim
  - And then, as insurance against any further rebellions, he took most of the royal family captive, Daniel being among them
  - Daniel was probably around 14 or 15 when captured and would be trained for 3 years

Here is something important to understand about what Daniel was dealing with

- Daniel was not being punished for *his* actions, he was caught up in a culture that forgot God
    - When a nation forgets God, everyone suffers; we are in that time in this nation
  - Daniel probably was filled with questions and perhaps even a few doubts as he was traveling the 800 miles to Babylon but God's plan was in motion
  - Because one day, Daniel would wield more power than any other member of the Hebrew people had ever known since Joseph, and it was God who put it all in place
    - What is God working in your life right now?
    - Your times of difficulty could very well be the plan of God unfolding in your life that will bring tremendous blessing if you will only trust Him through the journey
  - Daniel is a prime example (Like Joseph, Moses, and Paul) of a person who turned adversity into opportunity
  - How? By looking ahead not back
- 5 lessons from Daniel's early years that we can apply to our lives as we enter 2022
    1. Accept the inevitable interruptions in your life
      - a. Life is often not fair
      - b. Bad things often happen to good people
      - c. Innocent people are preyed upon and the bad guys often get away
      - d. But we do have a hope: **Rev 21:3-5** gives us this promise:

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated*

*on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

2. Don't get hung up trying to determine the source of your situation
  - a. It is natural to wonder or ask why but it is dangerous to get stuck there
  - b. Every time we face adversity, we have a choice
  - c. We can yield to the flesh and allow our lives to be consumed by the circumstances and our emotional responses or we can choose to live by faith in God
  - d. Every circumstance of adversity is another opportunity to see the Hand of God work in your life
  - e. Paul writes of an incredible promise we have been given in **I Cor 10:13**

*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

3. Resist the temptation to believe the lie that you are entitled to the "good life"
  - a. Our culture wants us to think that we should have what we want when we want it
  - b. This is where Life Isn't Fair comes from
  - c. When you are questioning God can I remind you who you are talking to?
  - d. AW Tozer said, "*Whoever seeks God as a means toward desired ends will not find God. God will not be used.*"

Lesson #1 – Accept the inevitable interruptions in your life

Lesson #2 – Don't get hung up trying to determine the source of your situation

Lesson #3 – Resist the temptation to believe the lie that you are entitled to "the good life"

4. Refuse to blame others
  - a. There are very, very few times when there is a totally innocent party in any adverse situation, and you are not the exception
  - b. Joseph was sold by his brothers and then falsely accused and put in prison, but he did not sulk and become bitter – he continued to trust and serve God in spite of the circumstances
    - i. He kept the situation in perspective
    - ii. **Genesis 50:20** – *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*
  - c. Daniel, in spite of being a POW, rose to a position of unthinkable power
5. Never forget that God wants to use you in greater ways than you can ever imagine
  - a. This means living by faith in greater ways every year
  - b. Paul saw the big picture and encouraged the readers of **2 Cor 4:16-18**

*Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal*



*glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

**Eph 3:20** - *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

**Rom 5:3-5** (New Life Version) - *We are glad for our troubles also. We know that troubles help us learn not to give up. When we have learned not to give up, it shows we have stood the test. When we have stood the test, it gives us hope. Hope never makes us ashamed because the love of God has come into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who was given to us.*

- In this year to come let every circumstance of adversity you encounter become an opportunity to see God work in your life in ways that you could never possibly imagine.