

*Finishing 2008 Well*  
December 28, 2008

*Finishing is better than starting. Ecclesiastes chapter 7 verse 8 (508)*

1. This truth will soothe my regrets

- Missed opportunities of 2008 can haunt me
- Regrets from 2008 can rob my joy
- My mistakes from 2008 can preoccupy me & cause me to miss what is ahead of me
- ***I have not achieved it (arrived!), but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.***

*Philippians chapter 3 verses 13 & 14 (901)*

Forgetting my past...what it means

- I stop letting my past overshadow my present...let the past be the past, BOTH good & bad
- I stop letting my past be a barrier to my future
- I stop using my past as an excuse to drop out of the present
- I refuse to mope about my past
- I stop wishing my past were different
- I refuse to let my past be the focal-point of my attention & impede my progress
- I acknowledge my past sin, own it, ask God for forgiveness, then choose to live in the reality of Christ's forgiveness
- ***It is impossible to please God without faith.*** Hebrews chapter 11 verse 6 (926)
- ***If we confess our sins to God, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.*** 1 John chapter 1 verse 9 (941)
- ***Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*** 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17 (884)
- ***God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God...***  
*Romans chapter 8 verse 28 (863)*
- ***I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.***  
*Philippians chapter 4 verse 13 (901)*

2. This truth saves me from living in the past

- Some live with a romanticized view of the past...
- They're the ones who say things like "I feel bad for the young people today, because..."
- In a simple way, would you really want to go back & relive 2008 & its spiritual, physical struggles?
- Aren't you better placed today having gone through those tough times?
- Would you really like to relive the physical & spiritual battles of 2008?
- ***When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow....***

*James chapter 1 verses 2 - 4 (930)*

### 3. This truth should calm my fears of the future

- For some, 2008 was a brutal year & it causes us to fear our future
- God wants us to live in the reality that He has a good plan for us and that He will bring this good to pass no matter the difficulties & challenges we face
- ***“I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11 (596)***

### 4. This truth should build my faith

- What is 2009 going to be like??
- Will it be as challenging or more challenging as 2008??
- What if I can't make it through 2009??
- ***Those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.***  
*Isaiah chapter 40 verse 31 (548)*

### 5. This truth should cause me to step out & start!

- Some of us are frozen at the thought of starting something new this coming year
- Starting school or the forgiveness process or counseling or a diet or a new job or a new discipline
- Or maybe starting something new means I need to stop something I've done for so long...an addiction, a destructive habit, a life-long struggle
- Start! Because remember, “Finishing is better than starting!” And the only way you experience the joy of finishing is by starting!

### More

- What is it that God wants me to “forget” about my past? Why not take the time to work through the material under the “What it means to forget” section and really try to give it to God?
- Hebrews 11:6 says that God wants us to live a life of faith in order to please Him. How is God asking you to live by faith in 2009? Will you?
- What are the tough times that God allowed you to go through in 2008? How can you see God growing you through these tough times? Take some time this week to thank God for the growth / changes in you because of these tough times.
- In what areas is God asking you to trust that He really does have a good plan for your life in 2009?
- What area of your life is God asking you to “trust in the Lord?” How will you do this in 2009 so that you will experience the strength He promises?
- What is one thing that God is asking you to start in 2009? When will you start? How? Make sure you tell some others about this & ask them to pray for you in this.