

RESET YOUR FAITH IN 2024

Part 5 of ADVENT 2023. Isaiah 55:6-7.

Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. December 31, 2023.

PASSWORD RESET

My recent experiences with online passwords.

RESET YOUR FAITH

As 2024 begins, it's a good time to reset your faith if ...

- Drifting from Jesus.
- Going through the motions.
- Straying into negative thinking.
- Walk doesn't match talk.

ISAIAH 55

The context of Isaiah 55: God's people exiled to Babylon in 586.

- They wondered if there was any way back to the Lord.
- The Holy Spirit gave the prophet a message of hope.
- There was a way back, restoration, forgiveness.

Isaiah 55:6-7 (ESV) "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; 7 let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him."

THREE PARTS OF A FAITH RESET

Part One: The Principle. Find God - verse 6.

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;"

- We find alternatives to God.
- Churches replace God with programs and activities.
- Individuals replace God with “spiritual” experiences.
- The window of opportunity will not stay open forever. Find God now.

Jeremiah 29:12-14 (ESV) “Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you,” declares the LORD.

- Sin is attractive and addictive.

Part Two: The Precept. Forsake Sin - verse 7a.

“...let the wicked forsake (leave) his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD...”

- Holding on to sins will de-energize your faith.
- The message of verse 7 is: Stop running **FROM** God. Run **TO** God.
- The main obstacle is our choice to live on our own terms. Jesus warned:

Mark 8:34-35a (NLT) “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. 35 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it...”

- Choose: Leave your sins, return to God.

Part Three: The Promise. Feast on Forgiveness - verse 7b.

“...let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

- Trust God’s promise of compassion and abundant pardon.
- Live in the freedom of knowing you are always loved and accepted by God.

- In Christ, we find compassion and pardon in abundance:

Ephesians 1:7-8 (ESV) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us,

- The Greek word for “forgiveness” means “to send away.”

Psalms 103:12 (ESV) ... as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

- In Christ, our guilt is removed so completely that it can never return.

RESET YOUR FAITH IN 2024

Brian Doerksen wrote a song in 1994 that became my prayer.

Don't let my love grow cold
I'm calling out, light the fire again
Don't let my vision die
I'm calling out, light the fire again

You know my heart my deeds
I'm calling out, light the fire again
I need Your discipline
I'm calling out, light the fire again

(Brian Doerksen. CCLI#1346920 ©1994 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing)

Let's agree to follow Jesus together with fire in our hearts.

- In 2024, pray, “Lord, light the fire again.”

BONUS CONTENT: CONFESSIONALISM AND PIETY

Excerpts from K. DeYoung's article: Can Pietism and Confessionalism Be Friends?

Pietism, it is said, emphasizes dramatic conversions, tends toward individualism, pushes for unity based on shared experience, and pays little attention to careful doctrinal formulation. Confessionalism, on the other hand, is a more churchly tradition, with creeds, catechisms, and liturgy. It emphasizes the ordinary means of word and sacrament...

... American evangelicalism has tried too hard to be relevant, has largely ignored organic church growth by catechesis, has too often elevated experience at the expense of doctrine, has minimized the role of the institutional church, and has worn out a good number of Christians by assuming that every churchgoer is an activist and crusader more than a pilgrim. Confessionalism would be good tonic...

But I want a certain kind of Confessionalism. I want a confessionalism that believes in Spirit-given revival, welcomes deep affections, affirms truth-driven experience, and understands that the best creeds should result in the best deeds. I want a confessionalism that believes in the institutional church and expects our Christian faith to impact what we do in the world and how we do it. I want a confessionalism that is not ashamed to speak of conversion...

I want a confessionalism that preaches and practices deep piety. Whether this is labeled "pietism" or just part of our rich confessional tradition doesn't matter to me. What matters is that we have ministers and parishioners who realize there is an external and internal dimension to the faith. I want Christians to know that going to church, hearing the word, reciting the creeds, singing the hymns, and partaking of the sacraments is not peripheral to the Christian life; it is our lifeblood. And I also want Christians who do all those things every week to pray in "their closets," look for opportunities to share the gospel with the lost, submit to Christ's lordship in every area of life, and understand that true faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance that not only others, but they too "have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation" (Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 21).