

January 5, 2014

Mostly Personal...

Loved Ones,

Well, the calendar page has turned and hope springs anew! Some of God's kindest creations are the cycles of times and seasons—reminders our Father is the author of new beginnings! The problem with New Year restarts is that unless we live differently, the New Year may end up as troubled as the old year. Some people had a bad year because they made poor choices. But hold on—Old Testament patriarch Job is evidence that some bad years come even when we made excellent choices! To those who suffered even after making all the right choices last year, I say, "Hang in there! Help is on the way!" But to those who made the wrong choices, especially if you feel unworthy to ask God for help, let me tell you an encouraging story.

During the 1929 Rose Bowl, California player Roy Riegels recovered a fumble, but was hit so hard that he turned around and ran toward the wrong goal. He was tackled by his own teammates just before crossing the goal line, but Georgia Tech still scored on the final play of the first half. Roy was booed by his friends and mocked by his opponents.

As halftime ended in the California locker room, Riegels looked at his coach, his cheeks were wet with a strong man's tears. "Coach," he said, "I can't play anymore to save my life. I've ruined you, I've ruined the University, and I've ruined myself. I can't face that crowd." The coach reached out his hand and put it on Riegels' shoulder saying, "Roy, get up and go on back; the game is only half over." Riegels went back and those Georgia Tech men will tell you they have never seen a man play football as Roy Riegels played that second half. Tech won the game, but Riegels was the star of the second half. His hard play and excellent attitude in an embarrassing situation won him the respect of friend and foe alike!

God feels the same way about those of us who have gone the wrong way. Shame threatens to overwhelm us, but the final verdict has not been rendered. No matter where you are, as long as you're still living, the game's not over yet. Our Heavenly Father is the God of new beginnings! To the extent you are able to do so, set aside the troubles of 2013 and let God redeem your past and restore what the enemy has taken.

I love you,
Pastor Stephen

P.S. Some promises to remember

Isaiah 1:18-20 "Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Joel 2:25-27 NIV "I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—my great army that I sent among you. ²⁶You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. ²⁷Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.