

## Scripture Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

*Although no one can go back and make a brand new start,  
anyone can start now and make a brand new beginning.*

—Carl Bard

The first few days, even weeks, of January are sort of shocking. Most of us can't believe another year has flown by.

In some ways, January is an exciting month because it is a transitional month — a month of beginnings. In fact, the name of this month has associations with this very concept of beginnings, doorways, openings, gateways and transitions.

There's little doubt that the name derives from the Roman god Janus, who is usually depicted as having two faces — one looking to the past and one to the future.

So, it's January, a month that evokes mention of the Roman god Janus, god of beginnings, opportunities and transitions. This is a perfect moment to consider which direction we're going as we face the year unfolding before us.

The question for us as we enter the year 2019 is whether we will look forward through the eyes of faith, or backward toward what once was. And in this discussion, the Bible can help us, particularly, Paul's letter to the Philippians.

In chapter 3, the apostle writes: "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on" (vv. 13-14).

So will we look backward or look forward? It's not always a bad thing to look back on the past. In fact, in the Bible we are given constant reminders to "forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:2). Looking back and remembering.

Samuel, the last judge of Israel, took a stone after Israel scored a stunning victory over the Philistines, and named it Eben-Ezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12 KJV). Looking back and remembering.

Looking backward, setting up a few stones, remembering the goodness of God and counting your blessings is a good thing — an exercise worth doing.

But looking backward can also be dangerous and destructive. Will we pine and mope over missed opportunities, or will we face forward with the eyes of faith to see what God might have for us?

Let's have a forward face filled with faith as we enter this new year!

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: O God of new beginnings, open my eyes to see your glory. Amen.*