**NEWNESS OF LIFE**

Sunday School Lesson 18

*FORMER THINGS*

Romans 6:4-14

6/5/2022

**Introduction:** We’ve finally arrived at the last lesson in our series on *Former Things.* Let’s briefly recap everything that has been covered throughout the last seventeen weeks that has led us to this Sunday. We started by looking at the dynamics of the past. The past can’t be changed, and the memory of the past is also necessary for our learning. Next, we looked at the power of the past. The past should not have power over us in the present even if it has power over the consequences we are presently dealing with. We then spent two weeks examining the deception of nostalgia. We noted that nostalgia often causes us to misremember the past by overinflating former successes. After those two lessons, we turned our attention to dealing with regrets. This was probably the hardest portion to cover in this series, as dealing with regrets is very challenging. Ultimately, we discovered that regrets can be dealt with because we have an abundance of forgiveness available to us from the throne of mercy and grace. Unfortunately, the most difficult part of dealing with regrets is not a lack of forgiveness from God but a lack of forgiveness from ourselves and others. Thus, we spent several lessons addressing the connection between regret and shame, and then the next two lessons were spent covering the topic of dealing with past things that others won’t forgive you of. This brought us to the topic of building back up broken trust. We know that trust is essential in any relationship, and we also know that trust is hard to build back once it has been broken. From there, we examined how we are to honor the past, and that led us to last week’s lesson on letting go. In this final lesson, we will conclude by looking at the fact that we have new life in Christ!

1. **OUR FORMER LIFE ENDS DAILY. WE HAVE A RENEWED LIFE TODAY.**
2. **Notice that the old creature of our flesh dies daily; thus, even yesterday’s body is now a former thing (1 Corinthians 15:31; 2 Corinthians 4:16a; Galatians 2:20; 4:14-16; 5:24; Romans 6:4-6).** The apostle Paul tells us that he died daily. We understand that this is referring to the old man. It is referring to the flesh. We have to die to the flesh every day because a dead flesh is no longer bound to sin. With that consideration in mind, let us remember the fact that this means the body of yesterday is dead. It is now a former thing. This is a wonderful thought for every believer. You might be struggling with the former things that kept your flesh in bondage, but that flesh is dead now. It is a former thing. Galatians 4 shows us that those who walk according to this rule will have peace and mercy upon them. Why? I believe the answer is that they experience the freedom that comes from that daily death. For those stuck on some past wrong that you have committed, it’s time for you to realize that person who did that is dead and gone. He doesn’t exist today. The question is who is living right now in your life?
3. **Notice that we experience renewal daily which means that the new man is to be made new again and again (1 Corinthians 4:16b; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:7-14; Ephesians 4:24-27).** When we called upon the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, we know that we became a new creature. Those old things were then passed away. As I have stated before in this lesson series, I believe that it is generally easier for the Christian to deal with past failures that happened before we were saved than those failures that happened after salvation. That’s because we know how absolutely foolish it is that we would return to those former things that we did before we knew Christ. Romans 6 in particular does much to spell this out and convict us of wrongdoing that occurs after salvation. Does the Lord want us to be defeated, though, regarding those failures in the life of a believer? No. This is why the Bible shows us the need for renewal. We are made new in Christ at salvation, but then we also have a need for daily renewal. We have to “put on” the new man each day and put away the old man. That’s walking in newness of life.
4. **OUR FORMER MIND IS GONE. WE HAVE A RENEWED MIND TODAY.**

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1. **Notice that the former mind should be gone now. It lacked the needed understanding and wisdom for you to effectively serve the Lord today (1 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:5; 3:15-16; Eph. 2:3; Rom. 8:5-6).** As you look back on those former things, you will undoubtedly ask yourself this question on multiple occasions: What was I thinking? You were a child in your spiritual maturity. You thought as a child. Hopefully, now you think as a more spiritually mature Christian. Perhaps that former mind struggled with being doubleminded, and it made you unstable. Perhaps that former mind struggled with carnal thoughts, and it brought you back into the bondage of sin. Could you imagine being one of the disciples and looking back and reading through the Gospels? I imagined the great disciple Peter would probably have a few times where he wondered to himself what his thinking was at the time. This is not meant to excuse our sins of the past, but the simple fact is that you hopefully are a different person mentally now than you were at the time of that past failure. If not, then you are only ever learning and never growing.
2. **Notice that our transformation takes place through the renewal of the mind (Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:5; 1 Peter 1:13; 2 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:17-23; Colossians 1:9; 3:7-10).** We have two separate places in Scripture that speak plainly to the need for the renewal of the mind. Again, the usage of the word *renew* speaks to a continual making new. Our transformation takes places through the making new of the mind. Each day, we ought to strive to put on the mind of Christ. Of course, it is a daily struggle to truly think like Christ in all things. Yet, we also have hope in the fact that He teaches us in all things. Thus, there ought to be a continual learning and changing that happens with our minds. This is the growing in knowledge and grace that the Bible speaks of in 2 Peter 3:18. In an earlier lesson, we noted that having regrets over the past does positively speak to a change of thinking. We long for the day when our minds will forever be like Christ, but that day has not yet occurred. Thus, in the present time, we must focus our efforts on having our minds renewed day by day.
3. **OUR FORMER DESIRES ARE GONE. WE HAVE A RENEWED SPIRIT AND HEART TODAY.**
4. **Notice that former desires should be gone, as they were based upon the lusts of the former man (Ephesians 2:3; 4:22; 1 Peter 1:14; 4:2-3; James 4:3-5; Titus 2:12; 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:22).** We see the death of the flesh and of the mind, and that leads us now to the death of the spirit and the heart of man. This speaks to our desires. Undoubtedly, the things that we previously wanted have led us to make decisions that we now regret. Have you ever wanted something and then later wondered to yourself why you wanted that thing so badly? Your children probably have something now that they think they need, and they may later look back and consider why it was such a big necessity. This speaks to our spiritual maturity of the heart/spirit just like the spiritual maturity of the mind that we have already discussed. The Bible also refers to this in the spiritual sense as the difference between lusts and Godly desires. The things that you wanted yesterday don’t have to be the things that you want today. There was a day when Peter’s only desire was to catch fish, and by the time the day ended, his only desire was to follow Christ.
5. **Notice that we need the Lord to create a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us (Psalm 51:10; 37:4; Ephesians 4:23; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 Corinthians 14:1; Mark 10:35; Luke 8:14).** There is that word *renew* again. We need to have our spirit made new again and again. We need the Holy Spirit to commune with our Spirit daily and to direct us in the things that we ought to want and do. Perhaps, your priorities yesterday were out of order. You can dwell on that, or you can confess that and seek for the Lord to renew your spirit today. Ask Him to guide your desires. Those previous desires and priorities don’t have to be your desires and priorities today. I’m reminded of the parable of the sower and the seed. Some seed fell upon thorny ground. This reflects those who heard and received the Word, and they were ready to follow after it. Unfortunately, the cares of the world took their desires and turned them in a different direction. Thus, this can work either direction, and it is our responsibility to seek the Lord first and seek for Him to continuously renew our spirit.
6. **OUR FORMER STENGTH IS GONE. WE HAVE A RENEWED STRENGTH TODAY.**
7. **Notice that our former strength (or lack thereof) should be gone because it does not help us today (Galatians 4:9; 6:9; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Romans 14:1; Mark 14:38; Psalm 38:10).** Our former strength is insufficient. It is likely the cause of some consternation or reflection of past failure in our lives. Maybe some of us have even had a John Mark type of moment where we fainted for lack of strength. Someone might be looking at the past this morning and thinking to themselves that there is no way that they will have any strength today to have victory or even simplyto keep going. After all, if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. How will you possibly deal with adversity today if your strength yesterday was too limited to handle yesterday’s adversity? The answer is that the strength for today is not found in yesterday’s strength. Yesterday is gone, and if you rely on yesterday’s strength, then you are destined to continue in failure and fainting.
8. **Notice that if we wait upon the Lord, we will have a renewed strength (Isaiah 40:31; 2 Timothy 4:17; Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 3:16; Acts 9:22; Luke 22:32).** If your strength failed yesterday, the reason for it is simple. You were using the wrong strength. It is not my strength. It is His strength. I need Him to renew that strength in me daily. I need Him to make it new again! It took Samson up until the final moment of his life to realize that his strength wasn’t his own. It was from the Lord, and he needed the Lord to make it new one more time for him. So many Christians are fretting over the future because of the failed strength of the past. His strength is made perfect in your weakness. You need to go to the Lord and have Him make your strength new again. Your flesh is weak. My flesh is weak. We need His strength. We need it in every area of our life. We need it in our faith. We have such little faith. Seek the Lord to increase our faith. Don’t let the past rule in your life. Don’t faint. Get strength from Him!