**THE NOSTALGIA DECEPTION**

Sunday School Lesson 3

*FORMER THINGS*

Ecclesiastes 7:10

2/20/2022

**Introduction:** For our third lesson, we are going to dive right into the topic of nostalgia. The definition of nostalgia is a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations. Last week, we observed the fact that the past should not have power over the mind. One of the points of this observation was that we (and more importantly - Christ) ought to have power over the mind to direct those thoughts in the right direction. It was noted that both good and bad memories of the past have a way of coming to mind through a variety of sources that are both internal and external. It is our responsibility to deal with those memories appropriately when they come to mind. Subsequently, nostalgia might be roughly described by many as the emotional response that comes from our reflection upon those good memories. Yet, narrowly tailoring the definition of nostalgia to just being an emotional response to pleasant memories does not give proper consideration to what nostalgia is and why it occurs. Let’s first point out in this introduction that nostalgia in and of itself is not a sinful thing. We also need to point out, though, that nostalgia can be a very good indicator of some problems that need to be addressed in the present. We must pay close attention and give heed to what we’ll refer to in the lesson today as the nostalgia deception.

1. **NOSTALGIA IS AN EASY FEELING TO HAVE IN AN INCREDIBLY WORSENING WORLD.**
2. **Notice that the world does continue to get worse as time passes by, leading to its ultimate destruction (2 Timothy 3:1-13; 2 Peter 3:3; Matthew 24:12-38; Luke 17:26; James 1:15; Rev. 21:1).** As much as we would like this not to be true, the Bible shows us that the world is getting worse not better. Godlessness is on the rise. Cynicism and scoffing toward the things of God or just the very idea of God is on the rise. Wickedness and evil are on the rise. Where does all of this tend to lead for the aging believer? It often leads to nostalgia. There’s a longing for this world to return to a time where it was just a little bit less wicked than it is now. It’s amazing how just a little increase in wickedness can cause such a great increase in destruction and mayhem in society. While it is understandable for the believer to find himself with nostalgic feelings because of this, he must keep it all in proper perspective. Why is the world worse today than it was yesterday? One reason is simply that there are more sinners because there are more people. This does present great opportunity for us to serve God in this present hour. Another reason is that wickedness is easier to communicate than ever, but the same is true of good!
3. **Notice that the Devil and sin want to corrupt every institution that they can (2 Peter 2:19-20; Matthew 12:45; Romans 1:23; Genesis 6:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; Mark 4:15; 1 Timothy 5:15).** The Devil has a great desire to destroy every institution of God here on this earth. His first mission was to corrupt mankind, which he succeeded in. After that, he wanted to corrupt the children of Israel and every other nation for that matter. He wanted to corrupt Christ. He wanted to corrupt the disciples of Christ. He has tried to corrupt the Bible. He has tried to corrupt the church. He has tried to corrupt the home. As a result, we see much corruption in this world in just about every institution. The church is being corrupted, and a falling away is promised to occur. You can definitely see how the home has been corrupted. You can see how our nation, which was founded on Godly principles, has been corrupted terribly from this premise. All of this is to serve as a reality check of why nostalgia is just so easy for us. It's easy to be nostalgic over what the nation, home, or church used to be. Again, the challenge is not to avoid this nostalgia but to consider what God-given ability you have to influence these institutions.
4. **NOSTALGIA IS AN EASY FEELING TO HAVE IN THE MIDST OF TROUBLE OR TRIALS.**

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1. **Notice that trials, tribulations, and trouble should not be counted strange for the believer to experience (1 Peter 1:7; 4:12; Heb. 11:36; Gal. 1:7; 2 Cor. 4:8; Rev. 2:9-10; 1 Thess. 3:4; Jn. 16:33).** The Bible tells us to expect trials, tribulations, and trouble to take place in our lives. People will trouble us because they do not want us to fulfill the work of the Lord. We also have trouble when the Lord needs to chasten us. Tribulation refers to great trouble. This happens because the world hates Christ, and we are hated for His name’s sake. Trials happen because the Lord wants to strengthen our faith. All three of these words reflect what we perceive to be negative things taking place in our lives. These are things that make life uncomfortable for us. We are supposed to allow these difficult circumstances to make us better, but that can be challenging at times. As believers, we must be mentally and spiritually prepared for these events to occur. We should not be caught off guard by them. If we are ready for them, it will help us to better deal with the memories of a past where difficulties were not so obvious to us.
2. **Notice that nostalgia in times of trouble is a normal occurrence that makes us consider the cause and the course (Deut. 32:7; Psalm 77:5, 143:5; Isaiah 63:11; Lam. 5:21; Is. 46:9; Luke 15:17-19).** Again, this is where it is important to note that nostalgia is not always bad. In fact, nostalgia is a normal reaction when you find yourself in trouble or difficulty. Which of us can honestly say that they have never felt affinity for former things when they were in the midst of great difficulty? What we should do is use the nostalgia to consider the cause and the course. Why are things more difficult now than they were before? Why are things worse instead of better? If the answer is that you are just going through a time of unavoidable trial or tribulation, then you know the course that you must take. You must press forward in faith, trusting that the Lord will bring you If the answer is that you made a wrong turn and made things worse by your decisions, then you know the course to take. You must confess and correct your direction. The prodigal son had a feeling of nostalgia when with the pigs. He went home after that!
3. **NOSTALGIA IS AN EASY FEELING TO HAVE AS IT IGNORES THE PAIN OF THE PAST.**
4. **Notice that what we might consider to be better times in our lives were not perfect times (Hebrews 10:32; Isaiah 65:16; Ephesians 5:16; Job 5:7).** Consider the fact that we are born in trouble! From the moment we enter into this world, we are entering into a place of destruction and death. What person can say that their former days were perfect and without any trouble? I’m glad that there is a future day where that will be true, but it is definitely not the case yet for us. The days of this world are evil. We’re not eager to tell this to our children, but there is pain that awaits all of us in this life. Is there anybody in church today that can claim to have a past that was free from pain? Thus, when we speak of better times taking place in the past, it is important to note that we cannot speak of perfect times. The only man to ever live who could claim to have experienced perfect times in his past was Adam! The rest of us have been dealing with this sinful world from the time of our birth until this present hour. Let us not fail to remember this when we have nostalgic moments come up in our hearts and minds.
5. **Notice that our nostalgic mind likes to foolishly ignore the pain of the past (Ecclesiastes 7:10; Exodus 14:12; Numbers 14:3; Jonah 4:3-8).** Have you ever found yourself reflecting fondly on a time in your life where, if you are being honest, you have totally recreated the past from how you actually felt at that time? Our nostalgia tends to cause us to ignore the painful moments of the past. This happened to the Israelites when they arrived in the wilderness. They became nostalgic to what life was like when they were in Egypt. How had they forgotten so quickly how awful it was in Egypt? I think the reason is that present sorrow and suffering is always weighted more heavily by us than past sorrow and suffering. I can’t speak for others, but I know that I personally prefer completed tests over pending tests. When our mind tries to take us back to some “perfect” time in our past, let’s be sure to remind ourselves that life is full of troubles and trials. The irony is that the very past we are nostalgic over is probably the same past that we couldn’t wait to be quickly in the past at the time!
6. **NOSTALGIA IS AN EASY FEELING TO HAVE AS IT OFTEN INFLATES OUR SUCCESSES.**
7. **Notice that nostalgia usually makes us look better than we actually were at the time (Job 29-30; 32:1).** This was definitely the case with Job. There’s no doubt that Job had a good life before his trouble came. It’s hard to blame Job for thinking back to a better time in his life. I think we’d likely all do the same if we were in Job’s shoes. The problem with Job’s nostalgia is that it was very exaggerated. Job presents himself in Job 29 as essentially being the answer to everybody’s problem! He said he was eye to the blind and feet to the lame! He said that he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy! If we heard someone say all this, we’d ask them who they thought they were! Job’s friends, while they were wrong for their own speech, were so flabbergasted by his self-righteousness that they had nothing to say back to him at the beginning of Job 32. Of course, this led to a very sharp rebuke from the Lord. This is the great danger and potential deception of nostalgia. It has the ability to recreate our image.
8. **Notice that the inflation of past successes has only one ending for us – pride (Job 32-34).** This was not limited to Job only. Other men in the Bible were also bitten with the pride bug by allowing their nostalgia to recreate the image of their past. I believe this happened with both King Saul and King David. I believe we can also see where it happened to Peter. What is the biggest danger of victory? It is the potential for pride to enter into the heart. We often think of this only occurring right after the victory, but through nostalgia, this becomes an ongoing battle for us. After all, Job was prideful not while he was in the midst of victory, but while he was in the midst of suffering. We must be ever vigilant to stopping pride from seeping into our hearts and minds. Once we inflate our successes from the past, then we will start to convince ourselves that we are more capable in the present than we really are. Our capabilities are limited to our availability to God and humility before Him.