**THE NOSTALGIA DECEPTION: PART 2**

Sunday School Lesson 4

*FORMER THINGS*

Ecclesiastes 7:10

2/27/2022

**Introduction:** In last week’s lesson, we didn’t quite have time to look at all of the thoughts laid out throughout the printed lesson material. While the plan was always to have a second lesson dealing with the same topic, we are going to start off this lesson by looking at the fourth major point from last week. From there, we will continue to further consider the deception that can come along with nostalgia. Before we begin, let’s briefly recap what we have considered thus far in our lesson series. In our first lesson, we looked at the dynamics of the past. The past cannot be changed, is a needful component for the present, and continues to produce outcomes in the present and future. In our second lesson, we looked at the power of the past. While it has power in the mind, it should not have power over the mind. While it has power over present circumstances, it does not have power over present decisions. While it dictates our current testimony, it cannot control who we may become. It also does not have power to give us victory in present and future battles. In last week’s lesson, we noted that nostalgia (a strong affinity for past events) is easy to have in this worsening world. It’s also easy to be nostalgic when we are in the midst of troubles and trials. Lastly, we say that nostalgia is easy because it ignores the pain of the past. Let’s observe some more truths about this topic of nostalgia:

1. **NOSTALGIA IS AN INSTRUMENT THAT IS USED TO INFLATE OUR SUCCESSES.**
2. **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! While Job was a Godly man who was greatly blessed by the Lord, it’s hard to see Job 29 as anything other than one who was looking on the past with memories that were not consistent with reality. 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.
3. **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. I believe that the Devil is always looking for an opportunity to cause a person to be lifted up with pride, as he knows that the Lord hates the proud look. Additionally, 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. We know the end result of pride and a haughty spirit – destruction and fall.
4. **NOSTALGIA IS AN INSTRUMENT THAT IS USED IN OUR OVERTHINKING.**

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1. **Notice that the thoughts we often think are wise may be vain in the eyes of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:19-23; 13:11; Acts 26:9; Mark 13:11; Psalm 94:11-19).** One of the biggest struggles that many Christians face is the potential for overthinking things in their lives. We tend to think that much thinking means wisdom on our part, but the Bible shows us that our thoughts are not always wise. The ones that we think are wise are often vain. We’ve all been guilty of spending too much time thinking about an issue that resolved itself without any action on our part at all. We have to ask ourselves in those times what benefit all of that thinking did for us. They are empty thoughts. They serve no benefit to us other than to cause us worry and frustration. As we have observed previously, we are to have our thoughts brought into the obedience of the Lord. It’s interesting that the Bible speaks about putting away childish thoughts and maturing in our thinking. Have we ever stopped to think about what all that entails? We probably only think about that from worldly maturity, but spiritual maturity means value over vanity.
2. **Notice that nostalgia allows us to spend much time thinking about things we want but may not be able to have (Proverbs 21:5; Luke 24:38; 12:11-26; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Matthew 6:34).** As noted last week, nostalgia may be used as a good tool to bring us back to a place that we ought to be. Unfortunately, though, nostalgia is often used as a tool to distract our thinking on things that we want but can’t have. This goes back to the first lesson where we looked at the fact that we cannot relive the past. No matter how much we might want certain things of the past to return, they are not coming back. Where does this lead us then? It leads us to a place of wantonness. This is what the Bible speaks about in Proverbs 21:5. The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want. We might not see much harm in some of our nostalgic thinking, but if we stay in our nostalgic thoughts, we will quickly find ourselves in a place of frustration over what we can’t have. This leads us to discontentment, which we will see might be the reason we are being nostalgic to begin with!
3. **NOSTALGIA IS AN INSTRUMENT THAT IS USED AS A RESPONSE TO DISCONTENTMENT.**
4. **Notice that contentment is a matter of satisfaction with what you have in the present (Hebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Philippians 4:11).** When the Bible speaks about contentment, It speaks of being satisfied with what we have in our present condition. Can contentment and nostalgia exist together in the same place? That’s the question we need to consider. While affinity for past events doesn’t necessarily mandate that we must be discontent presently, feelings of nostalgia should cause us to consider the reason for the nostalgic thought. If the nostalgia is a brief response to some triggered fond memory, it may be nothing that needs further consideration. On the other hand, if we are having constant feelings of nostalgia, it likely speaks to a present discontentment. As we observed last week, nostalgia often happens as a result of being in trouble or trials. We look back on a previous time with more fondness than the present. Paul learned that in whatsoever state he was in, therewith to be content. Godliness with contentment is great gain. Let’s consider whether our nostalgia is a response to discontentment.
5. **Notice that discontentment causes inaction, and nostalgia may be used as a means of avoidance (Philippians 4:13; 3 John 1:10).** The contentment of Paul led him to make the statement that he could do all things through Christ which strengtheneth him. When we are content, it’s easy to keep pressing forward. We have nothing constraining us. When we are discontent, though, it leads us to inaction. Have you ever observed a discontent employee in the workplace? While they may not be a lazy person, their attitude may often lead them to inaction and minimal effort. It’s hard to keep pressing forward when we are not happy with our current situation. As it relates to nostalgia, we see that the discontent person may use nostalgia as a way to avoid moving forward. If a person is happier with the past than the present, they may choose to dwell on the past in their minds as opposed to doing anything in the present. We must be careful that we do not allow nostalgia to keep us from doing the work for the Lord that we ought to do. Sadly, many are stuck in their past because they won’t be content about the present.
6. **NOSTALGIA IS AN INSTRUMENT THAT IS USED TO JUSTIFY OUR CURRENT FAILURES.**
7. **Notice that nostalgia justifies our current failures by emphasizing that our circumstances are more difficult than before (Acts 1).** To illustrate this point from the Word of God, we are going to look at the reverse in action. When we start reading in the book of Acts, we find the disciples in a difficult position. They had been given the responsibility of continuing Jesus’ ministry. The challenge, though, is that Jesus had left them and ascended back into Heaven. Of course, they had the Holy Spirit to help them, so they were certainly not powerless. At the same, it would be hard to blame them for feeling a little bit nostalgic as they found themselves in Jerusalem. They had great memories of all that Jesus had done. If the disciples had given in to that sentiment, it might have led them to failure instead of success. After all, when Jesus was with them, their jobs were substantially easier. He was the One who performed all of the miracles. Thankfully, they did not cling to nostalgia and use it as a crutch to justify failure.
8. **Notice that nostalgia justifies our current failures by emphasizing the changes that have taken place from the more favorable times of our past (Genesis 21:7; Psalm 92:14; Isaiah 46:4).** When we continue in nostalgia, it causes us to dwell on former things. This leads us to spend too much time thinking about all of the differences that have occurred from those former things until now. This is a common occurrence in those who are well-developed in years. They spend so much time thinking about what they used to do or used to be, and it causes them to emphasize the change that has happened since then. Every person who is more than a millisecond old in this world can think back to a former time in his life when he was younger! We must stop allowing nostalgic thinking to justify our current failures. You might not be able to do what you could do thirty years, but you can do something! There are few things more frustrating than watching a seasoned Christian host their own funeral in the later years of their life. You’re not dead yet! Keep serving God. Stop dwelling on what was and consider what is.