**HONORING THE PAST**

Sunday School Lesson 15

*FORMER THINGS*

Proverbs 22:28

5/15/2022

**Introduction:** We are going to totally shift gears this week away from the topic of rebuilding broken trust and from the overall negative aspects of the past. The previous eleven lessons have all dealt with some unpleasant relationship with the past. We started with dealing with regrets, and then we moved on to deal with how to confront the guilt and shame that comes along with those regrets. After that, we addressed the way in which we are able to move forward from an unforgiven past. That led us to this last topic of rebuilding broken trust. If you can remember where we were at before we went down that path of lessons, you will recall that we were looking at how to deal with nostalgia. We noted that nostalgia can be a very deceptive feeling that draws on enjoyable past experiences and strives to ignore or evade present distresses. One thing we haven’t looked at is the idea of honoring the past. This is taking a broader approach to the topic of former things, as honoring the past may not necessarily be our own past but the past of others who have gone on before us. Today’s society has some very interesting ideas about how to look at the past. Is honoring the past even something that we should do, and if so, what is the right way to do it? This is the primary question that we will be seeking to answer from the Word of God.

1. **WE ARE TO CONSIDER THE PAST AND GIVE HONOR WHERE IT IS DUE.**
2. **Notice that it is wise to consider the decisions of others who have gone on before us (Deuteronomy 32:5-7; Judges 2:10; Psalm 77:5; Isaiah 41:22; Hebrews 10:31-33; ).** In Deuteronomy 32, we find a sermon that Moses preached to the people of Israel. One key point of the message was that they needed to remember the days of old and consider the years of many generations. While the people were living in a day of a corrupt generation, they needed not to look far in history to find better examples for them to follow after. What if the Israelites in the wilderness had taken the time to consider the decisions of those who had gone on before them? Did they stop to think about Joseph? I wonder if they ever considered the faithfulness of Abraham or Noah. Unfortunately, the wise King Solomon understood how rarely people truly look back to the past and consider the decisions of those who have passed. We find this mentioned in Ecclesiastes 1. In verses 9 through 11, the Bible shows us that history so often repeats itself, and the reason for that repetition is the lack of memory by those in future generations. As mentioned at the beginning of this series, the past is needful for our learning.
3. **Notice that we are to give honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7; 2:10; 1 Timothy 5:17; Proverbs 21:21; Exodus 20:12; Matthew 19:19; Ephesians 6:2).** It’s important for Christians to understand that it is okay to honor others. In fact, it’s not just okay; it is Scripturally commanded! We have taken verses about worship of men or seeking the glory of men as some type of command against honoring or even rewarding others. The fact of the matter is that every reference to this in the New Testament is directed toward the recipient of honor and not to the person giving the honor. To summarize, Christ warns us to be careful when we do things not to do them for the purpose of being honored or praised by others. Of course, we must be careful to give appropriate honor to others, as we do not want to set a stumbling block of pride before them. Also, it should be clear that any honor given to man ought not to come close in comparison to the honor that we should continually give to the Lord. There are many saints in the Bible who openly showed honor to some other believer. Let’s give honor where it is due. Let us regard those who have walked before us and paved the way that we now walk.
4. **WE HONOR THE PAST BY KEEPING GODLY LANDMARKS IN PLACE.**

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1. **Notice that landmarks set the boundaries on where the Lord wants us to be (Deuteronomy 19:14; Job 24:2; Proverbs 23:10).** Landmarks are just as they sound. Their purpose was to mark the land. They were used to mark the land that the Lord had promised to the nation of Israel. They were also used to mark boundary lines between the personal property of the Israelites. Another object that was often used that was similar to the landmark was the altar. Its purpose was slightly different as it was used to mark a particular place and what the Lord had done there. It also, of course, was used to make a sacrifice unto the Lord. Going back to the landmark, we should understand that the Bible regards this object as a very serious thing. The Israelites were repeatedly instructed not to remove the landmark. The Bible does not even give authority to replace the landmark with a new one. This was to ensure that the boundaries were not changed, and it was also to show the perpetuity of the land that was promised. It’s no surprise that the Bible calls these landmarks ancient.
2. **Notice that we need to honor the landmarks of our faith to keep us from wandering away from the Lord (Deuteronomy 27:17; Proverbs 22:28; 27:8; Hosea 5:10; Jeremiah 14:10; 1 Peter 2:25).** The Bible warns about being sheep that have gone astray. We are to stay in the pasture of the Lord. We are not to wander away from His and His presence. How do we keep that from happening? We must look to the landmarks that have been set in place by the Word of God. We cannot move these landmarks. There is a curse upon the one who moves the landmarks just as there is a curse upon the one who changes any part of the Holy Word! It is amazing to see in our generation the justification and excuses made by believers when it comes to the obedience of the Word of God. Does God change? No. Has His holiness changed? No. The Lord does not wink at sin. He also does not change what is right and what is wrong. It is not our right to change the meaning of the Bible to fit into what is accepted in society today. We must preach the whole counsel of God, and we must stay faithful to His Word.
3. **WE HONOR THE PAST BY CREATING MEMORIALS TO GODLY WORK.**
4. **Notice that the Bible shows us the need to create memorials to help us remember important events of the past (Exodus 12:14; 17:14; Matthew 26:13).** A memorial is something that is created for the express purpose of calling to remember a person, event, or thing. We tend to connect memorials mostly with the passing of a loved one. There are many memorials that have been created in our country with the purpose of reminding us of important events of the past. As Christian citizens, we should be concerned that our present generation is so interested in destroying memorials instead of creating them. I remember going to the 9/11 memorial for the first time. It was a very powerful reminder to me of what took place on that sad day. Notice that not all memorials have to remind us of something pleasant. Sometimes, memorials remind us of something that we ought not to do. This is what happened with Amalek. The Lord told Moses to make a memorial to remind others of the destruction of Amalek. This memorial hopefully helped others avoid the same fate as Amalek! Memorials can teach us.
5. **Notice that the work of God deserves many memorials (Esther 9:28; 1 Chronicles 7:2; 16:12; Mark 14:9; 8:18; Gen. 9:16; Matt. 16:9; Ps. 77:11; 105:5; 143:5; Joshua 22:7-8).** The mighty works of the Lord need to be remembered. For this reason, it is important for us to create memorials of what the Lord has done in the lives of others and in our own life. I think of a simple thing like a rainbow. It was given to man as a memorial of God’s grace and mercy. It’s sad to think of how that memorial has been perverted today. Another memorial that the Bible mentions is the memorial of Purim. This is what took place in the life of Esther. The memorial that was created was not to worship Esther. It was created to continually praise the Lord for what He did through the life of Esther. Likewise, when we create Spiritual memorials, let’s remember that these memorials shine a light on what the Lord has done. Aren’t you glad for the memorials found all throughout the Bible? The memorial of the woman who used her precious ointment on the head of Jesus is another great memorial. What does it remind us of? He’s worthy of our best!
6. **WE HONOR THE PAST BY CONTINUING IN GODLY TRADITIONS.**
7. **Notice that a tradition is a practice or ritual that is passed down from one generation to the next (Matthew 15:1-6; 1 Peter 1:18).** This is a very difficult topic, but it is one that we must discuss. The tendency for some is to ignore anything that is deemed a tradition. The Bible calls them the traditions of your fathers. In Matthew 15, the Lord is confronted about His disciples not following the tradition of washing of hands before eating. His response was to address the willful disobedience against God of the Pharisees as a result of some of their traditions. Some have taken this one situation as justification for their refusal to follow any traditions. Yet, is this the message that the Lord conveys in His Word? Are we to disregard all the traditions that we are handed down from those before us simply because there is not an overtly clear Biblical command to follow such a tradition? Based on this passage alone, we can see the clear point is simply that we ought to never follow a tradition that leads us against the Lord.
8. **Notice that we are commanded to hold the traditions we have been taught and to withdraw from anyone who doesn’t walk after those traditions (2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6; Galatians 1:14; Mark 7:8-9).** The church at Thessalonica was commanded to follow the traditions that they had been taught, and Paul went so far as to also command them to stay away from anyone who refused to follow those traditions. Was Paul having a momentary backsliding back into his Pharisaical ways? Of course not. This is a command given from the Holy Spirit of God. We honor the past by holding on to the traditions that have been given to us. Traditions are not bad. In fact, they are helpful in showing us a standard method or practice. The only issue with traditions is if we allow them to make the Word of God of none effect. Let us carefully consider the traditions we have been given, and let us not be so quick to run away from the practices that have been set in place for many generations.