**DEALING WITH REGRETS**

Sunday School Lesson 5

*FORMER THINGS*

2 Corinthians 7:9-11

3/6/2022

**Introduction:** After spending the last two weeks looking at the deception of nostalgia, we are now going to focus our attention on dealing with regrets. The word *regret* is not used in the Bible, but you can definitely find examples of it throughout both the Old and New Testament. The definition of the word is a feeling of sadness, repentance, or disappointment over something that has happened or been done. An additional definition given is a sorrow aroused by circumstances beyond one’s control or power to repair. Regret is the dark and uncomfortable side of our memories of former things. We would think that regret is an antonym of nostalgia, but that isn’t exactly the case. In fact, it’d be more accurate to say that regret is masked nostalgia but with a painful feeling attached to it. There is a wistfulness for the past found in regret just like nostalgia. The primary difference is that nostalgia wishes to relive the past because of the happiness that the mind perceives to be found there in the past, while regret wishes to relive the past to change the pain that was there or to punish one’s self again for the decisions made. Both regret and nostalgia give too much power to the past, and both of them can hurt our present state in a very significant way. We’ll likely spend today and at least one more week looking at how to deal with regret. Let’s consider the following:

1. **EVERY PERSON WILL HAVE SOME REGRETS BECAUSE WE ARE ALL SINNERS.**
2. **Notice that there ought to be regret that accompanies our sinful decisions (2 Corinthians 7:10; Psalm 41:4; Jeremiah 3:25; Romans 3:23; 2 Peter 3:9; James 4:17).** If we do not regret our sins, then that speaks to either a hardness of heart or spiritual ignorance. As believers, we have the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to declare our guilt unto us. Thus, we cannot really claim spiritual ignorance as a reason for not regretting our sinful decisions. That only leaves a hard heart as a reason for a believer not to experience the regret that comes along with sin. Regret is a normal and necessary feeling when it comes to dealing with our sin. It works repentance in our hearts. It is what the Bible calls a Godly sorrow. Knowing that every believer is a sinner, we should understand that every believer is going to have to learn how to deal with regret. Sometimes, we get stuck in our bubble, and we tend to think that we are the only ones having to deal with regret. Take a look around you. Every person that you see in church today is a sinner who has failed God on numerous occasions. We all carry those regrets and the accompanying shame that goes with them. Be sure that regret leads to repentance (and then forgiveness).
3. **Notice that those who don’t have regret over sins now will have regret over sins eventually (Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:12; Luke 13:28; 2 Corinthians 5:10).** Sadly, there are many in this world who have no regrets at all over their sinful decisions. They seem to have no problem waking up each day and repeating the same wickedness again. They lay their head to a pillow each night with what seemingly appears to be a clean conscience. There is no remorsefulness. There is no consideration for how they have wronged God. They are not embarrassed or ashamed by their sin. We know this to be true because if they were regretful, it might actually lead them to turn to Jesus Christ for their salvation. Do these people get the benefit of living a life free of regret? Of course not. First, they still have to deal with the principles of sowing and reaping in this world. More importantly, though, if they are lost, they will have to spend an eternity with regret. How hard is this for us even to imagine? Some of you might be dealing with regret over things that happened decades ago, but could you even fathom having to deal with that regret for an eternity? This ought to cause any unsaved person to tremble and fear.
4. **EVERY REGRET BECOMES MORE INTENSIFIED BY ITS UNPLEASANT OUTCOMES.**

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1. **Notice that regret does not have to wait for outcomes in order to be experienced (Romans 2:4; Acts 17:30; Matthew 26:75; Revelation 2:21; John 16:8).** Regret does not have to see outcomes in order to be experienced. Haven’t you ever done something and then immediately regretted it? You knew it was wrong. You had not been punished yet for it. You had not experienced any of the ill-effects of the decisions yet. You just knew it was wrong and shouldn’t have been done. This is regret in advance of unpleasant outcomes. If you are a born-again Christian, you have experienced this type of regret. After all, you did not have to experience Hell first in order to regret your sin. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, and He is there to reprove us of sin. This reproof should prompt regret in our hearts and soul. Regret should not require us to be caught or chastised in order to be experienced. You may be dealing with regret today over something that nobody even knows about, except for you and the Lord. If you have not confessed it to the Lord, be sure to confess it right away. You don’t have to wait for outcomes.
2. **Notice that regret is only made worse by the consequences that follow (Numbers 21:7; Joshua 7:20; Exodus 10:16; 1 Samuel 12:10; 2 Samuel 12:13; Jeremiah 8:14; Matthew 27:4; Luke 15:21).** While regret does not have to be based on outcomes, it often is. There’s the expression that someone does not regret their action as much as they regret getting caught. The offender is the one who knows whether that is true in each instance or not, but we do know that the outcomes will only serve to further regret. There is the hurt that is caused to others through our actions. As we see that hurt, the regret builds. Look at Judas as an example of this. When he saw what was done to Christ, he was filled with incredible regret. He tried to return the money. He thought he could undo his part in the murder, but he could not. His regret was so great that he took his own life. Other times, it is the hurt to our own reputation or future opportunities that causes the regret to increase. This is often why Christians struggle to deal with the regrets of their past. The present-day outcomes only intensify the regret that they are feeling.
3. **EVERY REGRET SPEAKS TO A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE OR DECISION MAKING.**
4. **Notice that if our perspective or decision making was the same when we made the decision as it is now, then we would not be experiencing regret (Jeremiah 8:6; Ezekiel 18:31; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Isaiah 35:5; Acts 9:8).** What is it that causes to experience regret? It is a change of mind or perspective. If we had the same mind then as we do now, then we would continue in that same path of decision making without regret or further consideration. We might refer to this as having our eyes opened to a bad decision that was made. Paul regretted the decisions he made when he was a Pharisee because he now saw service to the Lord in a different light. At one point, he thought that he was justified and vindicated in the decisions that he was making. He probably never thought that he would have regret for killing these people who were blasphemers from his perspective. That all changed when his eyes were opened on the Damascus road. Thus, our regret does indicate to us that there is a change in our thinking at the present in comparison to when we made that decision that we so badly regret.
5. **Notice that this truth ought to cause us to examine the change that has taken place, as we might be regretting the wrong thing (Luke 9:62; 24:13-25; Exodus 14).** As a young person, I heard older believers tell me that a believer will never regret serving God and obeying His Word. While I understand the thought that they were trying to convey, I must admit that this is not the case. Sadly, I’ve met several people in my life who have regrets over serving the Lord. They hate everything about their upbringing, and it seems that they truly believe they would have been better off not serving the Lord. How could this happen? The simple answer is that they have changed but not for the better. Their priorities now are all worldly things, and they regret “missed opportunities” from their youth. The secondary answer is that they don’t like the outcomes. Maybe they thought serving God meant they would have all these material blessings in their lives. The Israelites regretted leaving Egypt for the Promised Land. Two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus regretted following the Lord because it seemed like they had been led astray.
6. **EVERY PERSON WILL HAVE SOME REGRETS BECAUSE OTHERS MAKE DECISIONS THAT WE DO NOT AGREE WITH.**
7. **Notice that regret may be over a decision someone else made that we are left to deal with (Genesis 6:5-7; Exodus 32:6-14; 1 Samuel 15:10-11; 2 Samuel 24:15-16; Psalm 106:40-45).** Regret may not just be over decisions that we have made personally. We may also experience regret over past events which we had no personal control over. In some cases, this might be considered resentment instead of regret, but the thought is still the same. There is pain over past events that had an impact on our lives. The Bible speaks of God’s relationship with man. It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth! The Bible gives us several examples of where the Lord had to deal with regret over the decisions that people made. He watched as His chosen nation continually made choices that did nothing but further alienate them from their God and from the blessings that He wanted to bestow upon them. While these regrets may not be as strong in our minds as our own personal regrets, they can still cause us great pain.
8. **Notice that no person lives in a world where everything goes how they want it to (Proverbs 16:2; 21:2; Acts 5:29; 1 Corinthians 3:19).** There is no man on this earth who can claim that everything goes the way that he wants it to. The righteous must deal with the unrighteous. The prudent must deal with the simple. The wise must deal with the foolish. The rich must deal with the poor. The diligent must deal with the sluggard. The Godly must deal with the ungodly. The follower of Christ must deal with the followers of Satan. It would be wonderful if everyone was on the same page and following perfectly after God, but that’s not the reality of this sinful world. As a result, all of us are left to deal with regrets over the decisions that others make. None of us get to live in a world where everything goes perfectly according to what we want or think. In a later lesson, we will look more closely at this and see what happens when we allow the regrets from the decisions of others to rule in our minds.