

Living Without Regrets

2 Timothy 4:5-8 *But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at bringing others to Christ. Complete the ministry God has given you. As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me--the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his glorious return.*

Webster defines regret as, to mourn or be in sorrow. In other words to regret, is to live with remorse or in a state of grief about things that are out of our control and that is simply things from our past. Think about it like this, We can't control the past, but we can have a great deal of influence on the present. This is of great importance so that when our future becomes our past, we will have fewer regrets to deal with, Why?? because we are handling the present in a more productive way.

As he approached his death in II Timothy, Paul was able to look back upon his life with satisfaction and contentment. He expresses no regrets or remorse about the choices he had made. V 7 shows us that side of his thinking. He says *I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.* In a nutshell Paul said he had no regrets

Wouldn't you like to come to the end of your life free of guilt or doubt, free of thoughts about what might have been? But how is that possible? How can we live a life free of regrets? How can we make our present better than our past so that our future will be regret free. Sure there will be stumbles and missed chances along the way and no one's life goes perfectly does it?? But there are some things we can do to limit the possibilities of regret in our life, and there are ways to escape regret when it threatens to unravel our contentment.

Lets look at some suggestions so we can be more victorious in the future and more peaceful about our past.

I. Don't Do Things You Will Regret.

Now this sounds like a pretty obvious piece of advice doesn't it? Like the warning sticker: "Don't touch the hot iron while it is in use." But how many people have burned themselves on a hot iron? When we go ahead and do it is something we regret till the fingers heal. Sometimes the most obvious advice is the least regarded. The fact is that we often do things that we know we will regret. So why do we do it?

Usually, it is because we get our minds set on something and we do it in spite of our better judgment and warnings from others.

David did this. In II Samuel 24:2 he ordered a census be taken, even though it was against God's law. What's funny is that he immediately regretted it, even before there were any consequences, II Samuel 24:10. But after he had taken the census, David's conscience began to bother him. And he said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly and shouldn't have taken the census. Please forgive me, LORD, for doing this foolish thing."

So why did he do it? He was probably stubborn, and didn't think it through the best he could have. To live life without regrets listen to your conscience, and think through your choices. Our conscience is not perfect because it can be seared etc. but it is a good starting place. But be sure to listen to and think about the scripture Consider for example:

Proverbs 23:29-35 Who is always in trouble? Who argues and fights? Who has cuts and bruises? Whose eyes are red? Everyone who stays up late, having just one more drink. Don't even look at that colorful stuff bubbling up in the glass! It goes down so easily, but later it bites like a poisonous snake. You will see weird things, and your mind will play tricks on you. You will feel tossed about like someone trying to sleep on a ship in a storm. You will be bruised all over, without even remembering how it all happened. And you will lie awake asking, "When will morning come, so I can drink some more?"

Remember: Everything that looks good is not good. *(For example, a glass of pretty red wine)* If you don't believe this, just ask a person who has ruined their life with this beautiful looking stuff. Am I saying never to drink? NO, but I am saying that it may not be all some of your friends may want you to think it is, so be careful?

And in case some of you go out thinking that I am saying go ahead and drink, that is not what I am saying either. What I am saying is, to avoid making regrettable mistakes listen to the teaching of God and the advice of those around us who live good lives and don't use our freedom in Christ as a license to do as we please because it can bring regrets if we misunderstand and practice that freedom.

Secondly, to be able to live without regrets

II. Do The Things You Know You Will Regret Not Doing.

In a persons life there will be many opportunities to do good things, constructive things, even joyous things. You know already, that if you pass by these opportunities you will end

up regretting it. So, seize the day! Do what you know you should do, and you won't regret it will you? But if you **don't do** what you know you **should do**, you will regret it won't you?

Consider the young man in Matthew 21:28-30 *Jesus said: I will tell you a story about a man who had two sons. Then you can tell me what you think. The father went to the older son and said, "Go work in the vineyard today!" His son told him that he would not do it, but later he changed his mind and went. The man then told his younger son to go work in the vineyard. The boy said he would, but he didn't go.*

Which son loved the father? The one who said no but later did it, OR, the one who said yes, but never got around to going to the vineyard? The answer is simple, the one who said no, but later he went anyway simply because he could not live with the regret of denying his father. Do not wait until the end of your life when you may be filled with remorse about not doing what you should have done, but do the things as you go along that are important.

How many of you have ever heard of people who died regretting the time they spent with their children, or spending in church or reading the Bible, or spending too much money to help the poor or the needy, or being kind to others or being regretful of being friendly and loving, and the list could go on and on.

With the things I just mentioned and if you knew you were coming to the end of your life, would you have any regrets? But oh, how many people close their eyes tight with fear and regret because they did not do these things!

The rich man of Luke 16 did much with his life that meant nothing to him after he had died. He basically spent it on himself, his pleasure, his desires, etc. and in the end, what was troubling to him was what he failed to do. Once his life was over, what would he not have traded for just five minutes to warn his brothers not to follow him into torment. You remember the story well don't you. He was destined to an eternity of regret.

I heard a story of one remorseful man who died saying the words, "To be a boy again! To be a boy again!" **Children, take heed.** You have your life to live. Older ones, you still have time left. So we need to live our days in pursuit of good deeds, kind words, and loving warnings rather than in selfish pleasures and desires that will cause us much regret as our life comes to a close.

Don't forget that when you do the things you know you will regret *not doing*, you can chase regret right out of your life. Along this line, Alexander Graham Bell once said, When one door closes, another opens, but we often look so long and regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened before us.

So to avoid future regrets, look for the open door of opportunity instead of being sad about the ones that are closed or you missed along the way.

So the second point to help us avoid regrets was simply Do The Things You Know You Will Regret Not Doing But thirdly,

III. Learn Not To Regret What You Should Not Regret.

Part of the secret to living without regret is to realize that sometimes our feelings of regret are needless. Feelings should never run the train but for many they do so put them in their rightful place.

Lets look at the scripture or fact concerning how we should think. In II Corinthians 7:8,9 we read, *I am no longer sorry that I sent that letter to you, though I was sorry for a time, for I know that it was painful to you for a little while. Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to have remorse and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way.*

Paul says that he had regretted the hard words of rebuke that he had written to the Corinthians, but he no longer regretted it, because they had repented. We sometimes cause hard feelings when we rebuke the wayward brother, warn the sinner, or correct our children. But to regret these actions is not proper. In the long run we will certainly have no reason to regret words of warning.

Think with me a moment, which would you actually regret most, warning a person not to stand under a tree that was going to fall, or **NOT** warning them and then having it fall and injure them severely? In this area, we see that the enemy uses what we call regret, to be nothing more than false guilt. So if it is false, then it is not worth keeping is it?

Paul goes on to say in II Corinthians 7:10 *For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret that kind of sorrow. We can take this in several ways. Paul may mean that we should not regret the changes in our life that repentance brings. Or he could also mean that the sorrow that goes along with repentance should not be regretted, for it leads to salvation. Either way, knowing that we are on the right path, or helping others to get on the right path while they can, should free us from any regret.*

Finally, to live without regrets

IV. Escape them by seeking God's forgiveness.

It is true that we all make mistakes in life, we all hurt others, and we all make a mess of things at times. But we do not have to live with regret over past mistakes. When we turn to the Lord He forgives us and no longer remembers our sins, Hebrews 8:12. *And I will forgive their wrongdoings, and I will never again remember their sins."*

We too must forget what lies behind and press on with a new life, Philippians 3:13-14. *No, dear friends, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven.*

Even Paul, who had persecuted Christians, only remembered his own sins as a way to marvel at the mercy of God, 1 Timothy 1:12-16 *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord. He has given me the strength for my work because he knew that he could trust me. I used to say terrible and insulting things about him, and I was cruel. But he had mercy on me because I didn't know what I was doing, and I had not yet put my faith in him. Christ Jesus our Lord was very kind to me. He has greatly blessed my life with faith and love just like his own. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This saying is true, and it can be trusted. I was the worst sinner of all! But since I was worse than anyone else, God had mercy on me and let me be an example of the endless patience of Christ Jesus. He did this so that others would put their faith in Christ and have eternal life.*

Why waste time in regrets when we can ask for forgiveness? And secondly, don't waste time continually asking God to continually forgive those things because, you are simply asking him to remember and forgive what he has already forgiven and forgotten. If he has chosen to forget then He can't remember them can he????

So instead of living and re-living those regrets that have been forgiven, why not take God at his word and move on to the future and work at applying the first three points we looked at today? It will make your future a lot less stressful and you past a lot more restful. They were to

- ◆ Not Do Things You Will Regret
- ◆ Do The Things You Know You Will Regret Not Doing.
- ◆ Learn Not To Regret What You Should Not Regret.

The only way to truly escape all regrets in our life is through the forgiveness that is found in Jesus Christ.

A final thought: Be sure not to miss what you will regret for all eternity if you don't do it, and that is be saved. To do that read these next few lines that describe your condition and make the changes necessary so you can leave regret at the foot of the cross.

On the other hand if you have already done this, quit wasting your life. Press on, even in spite of the things you will do wrong. You won't regret is near as much as if you waste your life in false guilt and fear.

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God.
Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the _____ day of _____ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: _____

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at lapeerchurch@gmail.com Subject line: (Salvation)