

Living with Regret

One of the great disadvantages of living long enough to at least be at the *top of* if not *over the hill* is that there have been more opportunities to do and leave undone things to regret... and more time to reflect upon these regrets, Rom.6:21. I've always had dubious doubts regarding those who say they live(d) life "with no regrets." On the one hand, I must admit I'm impressed... and certainly a bit envious, since I have many, many regrets. On the other hand, I can't help but question- at least in my own mind, whether such people are: 1) callously insensitive to the sins they've surely committed and completely lacking in compassion for the hurt they've undoubtedly caused others; or, 2) just somehow resolutely rebellious to the degree that they refuse to acknowledge, let alone regret, anything and everything that they have done, and presumably, will do? Obviously, there is a sense in which must all learn to somehow *cope* with the sins of our past, for we assuredly cannot *change* them (cf. 1Tim.1:12-16), in order to effectively deal our present and whatever future remains for us, cf. Phil.3:13-14.

Some things we might *come to regret*, or we might *need to regret*:

- 1. Denying God, Jesus, or the Word.** Perhaps we were *ashamed* to be called, or act as a *Christian*- so we either timidly did nothing, or went along with the crowd in doing what we knew was not right, and would displease God, cp. 1Pet.4:12-16. Rather than *glorifying*, we *denied* and *dishonored* Him, cf. Luke 22:61; Matt.27:3; Acts 2:37. Or, perhaps we simply failed to *stand up* or *contend earnestly* for what we knew to be Truth, cf. Jude 3; Rom.1:16; Mark 8:38. Surely for anyone with a functioning conscience, such would cause unrequited *regrets*, would they not?
- 2. Presumptive sins.** Ps.19:12-13. Unintentional sins can be confessed, forgiven, and thus usually cleared from the conscience, cp. Num.15:27-29. But those that are *presumptive* (*proud, arrogant, or willfully rebellious*), even though confessed to Him and repented, somehow seem to remain as blots and stains on the conscience through regret, Num.15:30-31. Such obviously caused David (regarding his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband) to feel so much regret that he hyperbolized that surely he was "*brought forth in inequity, and in sin...conceived*," Psa.51:5. Have there been times when you, like me, have *known the 'right' thing to do*, but *did it not*, Jas.4:17?
- 3. Hurting others, or perhaps even destroying their faith.** Luke 17:1-2 (*anyone*) Matt.18:2-7 (*little child* chosen to illustrate *believers*). It is often said that "Actions speak louder than words." Indeed they can, but it is also true that "*the tongue is set among our members* (of *the body*, PCS) *as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell*," Jas.3:6. Yes, our *actions* can inspire or deflate and demoralize- but so too can our *tongues*, should we fail to carefully and consistently *bridle* and *control* them, cf. Jas.3:2-12.
 - Our *physical* families are *blessings* from God. How can we neglect, take advantage of, and abuse them *physically* (even *verbally*), *emotionally*, and *spiritually*? Do **you** have regrets regarding what you have done/not done or said/not said to your *physical* family? Should you have regrets?

- Our *spiritual* families are also *blessings* from God. How can we neglect, take advantage of, and abuse them *physically, emotionally, and spiritually*? Do **you** have regrets in regarding what you have done/not done or said/not said to your *spiritual* family? Should you have regrets?
- Our *fellowman* is also our family as we are, in that sense, all *children of the same Father*. How can we neglect, take advantage of, and abuse them *physically* (and *verbally*), *emotionally, and spiritually*? Do **you** have regrets in regarding what you have done/not done or said/not said to your family of *mankind*? Should you have regrets?

If I'm *overweight, ugly, have crossed-eyes, crooked teeth, ugly birthmarks, and talk funny*, or in some way am otherwise "not like you," I probably am already well-aware of it, and thus don't need you to tell me or others about it either face-to-face or on social media. Remember that I, too, am created in the image of God, and am loved by Him.

If I am *slow on the uptake, simple-minded, confused, or even politically, socially, or spiritually misguided*, or just don't *think and act like you*, ridiculing and calling me names isn't going to help. Overcome *evil* with *good*, rather than "fighting fire with fire," Rom.10:16-21. Remember that I, too, am endowed by God with an eternal soul that needs saving.

Conclusions/Applications- How to Live with Regrets:

1. **Stop piling them up.** We may not ever "get over" (expiate from our conscience) some of our failures, but surely we can stop adding to the pile, 1Cor.15:34; 1Pet.1:15-16. Allow these regrets to motivate you to live differently, and more diligently, 1Tim.1:16.
2. **Truly repent.** Are you sorry *you got caught* in sin- which is nothing more than feeling sorry for yourself, or sorry you *sinned against God*, cf. 2Sam.12:13 and Psa.51:1-4? While we may have to learn to *live with the regret* of our sin, *true repentance* is never *regretted*, 2Cor.7:10.
3. **Start seeing others as God does.** We tend see others as either: *like me* and therefore "loved;" or, *different from me* and thus "unloved." So, we regard and treat those are *like me* as "friends/family," and those who are *different than me* as "enemies" and treat them accordingly, cf. Matt.5:43. But what if we *felt and treated* those "unlike me" as God does- *loving* even those who *hate and persecute* you, Matt.5:44-48? As *wayward* or *disillusioned* "children" needing *compassionate teaching* and *reclamation* rather than *ridicule* and *rejection*, cf. Mark 6:34?

I could be wrong, but I believe that a thinking, feeling, and *spiritually aware* person will always have regrets with which they must learn to live and cope. But the real issue is not only whether or not we are willing to accept and admit them, but whether or not we allow them to change the course of our life.