

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Dealing With Regrets

(Jerry Fite)

Have you ever felt remorse over something that you did? Who hasn't? Have you ever been disappointed in yourself over a “missed opportunity” that you let pass by? If so, you have experienced regret.

Regret and anxiety are alike in that they both can be distracting to the walk of faith in the Lord. While anxiety is being worried about things in the future; regret is the remorse and disappointment over things concerning the past. Both can paralyze us in the present. While trusting in the Lord to provide while seeking first His righteous rule is the remedy for anxiety (*Matt. 6: 25-34*); what is God's antidote for our regrets that often haunt our thoughts, and rob us of joy?

Forgiveness is God's antidote for regret. Remorse for our sins should be channeled through a contrite heart before God. “*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*” (*Psalms 51:17*). Notice David's contrite or remorseful heart is in the context of sinning against God: “*For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have*

I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight; that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest” (*Psalms 51:3-4*).

Remorse or regret for deeds done in the past can follow two paths: godly sorrow or worldly sorrow. Paul writes, “*...for godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but sorrow of the world worketh death*” (*2 Corinthians 7:10*).

Worldly sorrow is full of regrets. One might regret the consequences of driving while intoxicated because such driving leads to the sudden loss of innocent life, but not have sorrow toward God for the sin of drunkenness (*Galatians 5:21*). One might regret lying and stealing, not because such actions are sinful before God (*Ephesians 4:25, Revelation 21:8, Ephesians 4:28*), but because of the embarrassment and shame in being caught as a liar and a thief. Take away the immediate regretful consequences, and the one who has worldly sorrow will probably get drunk, lie and steal in the future. Separation from God or spiritual death will continue.

Godly sorrow leads to a better way of handling regret: repenting. Repentance is not mere sorrow, for Godly sorrow produces it. The Godly sorrow that leads one to turn from his or her sin is the way of repentance that brings no future regret. Such determination to turn from our sin leads to God forgiving us.

When God forgives, he removes our sin against Him completely. “*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us*” (*Psalms 102:12*). In forgiving, God says, “*...and their sins will I remember no more*” (*Hebrews 8:12*). Being forgiven, we experience “*joy and gladness*” once again in being right before God (*Psalms 51:8*).

A therapist might encourage us: “Don't beat yourself up over your past, but look at yourself as being presently authentic and honest in admitting your failures. Better yet, with God's forgiveness, we can move on from a regretful past, and determine to “*live the rest of our time*” to “*the will of God*” (*1 Peter 4:2*). Are you regretting wasted years, or in forgiveness, do you see a new beginning for the rest of your years?