



Living With No Regrets – June 10, 2018
Dean Gage

Verses Covered

Philippians 3:12 - 14

Romans 7:15

Hebrews 8:12

2 Corinthians 7:10

Matthew 27:3 – 5

John 21:19

1 John 1:9

Let's go ahead and stand together this morning. We're going to begin, however, just a little differently. So you know it's kind of natural, we just, so many years we've turned and shaken hands so everybody just kind of naturally does that, Chuck. When you tell them to stand, everybody turns and shakes hands. That's OK. Make sure you know who you're worshiping with there beside you, OK. But we're going to move on this morning and I want us to begin by focusing our mind's attention and our heart's affection on the Lord. You see, because as wonderful as it is to come together and to worship with our brother's and sister's, we actually come for an audience of one today; the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And so we don't want to miss Him. I don't want to miss Him. I don't want you to miss Him today. And so, I don't know what your morning's been like. I don't know if you were arguing in the car on the way to church today. Or if you got up and have already had three hours of Bible study before you came to church, but I want us all come together under the banner of the word of God and under the banner Lord Jesus Christ. So will you think with me this morning about the Lord Jesus and especially about the price that He paid for us. This is from the book of Philippians. It says this:

⁷But everything that was gained to me, Paul says, I have counted, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and considered them as rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Jesus Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith,

Verse 10 says:

¹⁰my goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, be conformed to His death, ¹²not that I've already reached that goal or that I'm already perfect, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I have also been taken hold of, been taken hold of by Christ Jesus.

Well Chris and Peggy are at the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas. And you be sure and be in prayer for our convention this week. Because it faces many big issues. I want you to turn to Philippians 3 and Steve read a prelude to our text this morning. Because our text is from Philippians 3, verses 12, 13, and 14. And we are going to be looking at something this morning that is absolutely crucial and foundational to our living the Christian life and to accepting Jesus Christ. We're going to look at how we can live life without regrets, with no regrets. And Paul, in this passage, is going to give us the answer. But even more than that, he is going to share his own personal example of how we can do that and how we can live. Look at Philippians 3, verse 12.

¹²Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but look what he says, I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

And then our key verse this morning is 13.

¹³I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

And verse 14 is similar to twelve.

¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Let me ask you a question this morning. In fact, a couple of questions. One is; have you ever said something or done something that you regretted? Have you ever not said something or not done something that you later regretted? If any of you answered, "No" then I know something about you. You'll lie about something else also. For we all deal with regrets in all areas of our lives. And we even know people who seemed to live a life of regret, "Poor me. Woe is me." They're pessimistic. It's Mr. and Mrs. Doom and Gloom. You don't want to be around them. I don't want to be around them. And we find here that it's not God's intention. It's not His plan for us to live a life of regrets for either doing something or not doing something. Not His plan at all. He gave us a way to overcome it. And that's what we're going to make very clear this morning. It's a message from Paul that's very encouraging and full of confidence of how we are to live life.

Do you know who won the National Football Championship in 1990? Well to Chris' disappointment it was not the University of Alabama. It was the University of Colorado. And it is their one and only national championship. They had played in the national championship the year before in 1989 going into the game with Notre Dame in the Orange Bowl with a perfect 11 and 0 record. But they lost the game. And I'm sure that the coaches and the players had significant regrets that they may have not left it all on the field. And a historic pregame speech to the team was made by a coach, Bill McCartney, who later founded Promise Keepers, the men's ministry.

And he reminded them that they were playing in the game of their lives. But he also reminded them of what had happened the previous year. But he told them this. He said, "Forget last year. Forget what lies behind. This is the new game of your lifetime." And he said, "I want you to play hard." And then he said something else. He said to them, "When the game is over and we come back into this locker room, I want you to remember two words." And he turned to the chalkboard and he wrote these two words: No regrets. No regrets.

And you and I are now living in the game of our lifetime. And it's not for a one year national or even world championship. But it's for an eternal championship. One that lasts forever. And in our life here on earth, spiritual and otherwise, we can sometimes delay dealing with the regret until it's almost too late or is too late. And then we have to deal with whatever circumstances and consequences come before us. And we face regrets in many areas of our lives. Let me give you some examples. Some from daily living and others from our spiritual walk or spiritual relationship with Jesus. Ones in health. A few years ago I lost a dear friend who was a corporate executive from emphysema and COPD. And if you asked him, Dave would have said, "I regret starting to smoke, but I also regret not stopping before it went too far." And you never will find an alcoholic or a drug addict that would not say, "I regret that I started, but I also regret that I didn't stop." It can even be our own health, our personal health. That I regret that I didn't pay attention to the one physical body that God gave me through diet and exercise. But it may also be in relationships; particularly in the home and in the family. Because those relationships can have deep regrets if we don't do what we're going to learn today between a husband and a wife. And there's not a married man in this audience today that has not at some time made his wife cry. I didn't hear anything. It must have struck a chord. And then there's the parent/child relationships. Sometimes we can repair them and other times we can't. And those are regrets. There are also regrets that we can look at from this passage in business. Regret that I didn't take a particular job that God was calling me to do. Or to regret doing something I shouldn't have done. And I compromised integrity and character and truth and honesty. It may also be you've never heard a man on his deathbed say, "I wish I had spent more time at the office." Because, you see, these are interwoven and they overlap with each other. And business can get right back into our family regrets. And then there's also our Christian walk. How many times have you lost your temper? Remember what James says? The anger of God does not achieve, I mean, the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. And it may be salty language. It may be something that someone sees us do that impugns the name of Jesus Christ and hurts our witness before others. But the greatest regret of all would be the rejection of Jesus Christ.

Well we've all heard of the three "R's" in education: Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. I think they're still there. But there are three "R's" that we have to remember here, that we have to deal with to live a life of freedom in Jesus Christ. And all three of these "R's" are our choices and all three have far different final outcomes. What are these three "R's"? Regret, remorse, and repentance. Well regret is one of the saddest words in the English language. And it's a negative and its self-focused emotion of guilt and sorrow arising from a past wrong. But let me tell you what regret leads to. It leads to one of the other two "R's". And the first one is remorse. And remorse is nothing more than feeling sorry or regretting that you got caught. And not a parent in this room that has not told one of their children at some time, go tell them you're sorry. I'm sorry. But it often stops there. But we should have a progression to the next "R". And that next "R" is repentance. And repentance means that we're so sorry and contrite that we make a change. That

we change a course of our life, our direction, or a relationship. It is a change of our heart, our mind, and our attitude.

We think of regret as being negative. But regret can be positive if it leads us to repentance and then salvation and having that wrong put behind. Well Paul in all of his letters must have been a huge sports fan. And I honestly believe that he kept his television turned to ESPN. And he uses the analogy of several things. One was boxing, wrestling, but his most favorite was that of foot race. And that's what he did today. Some say he even played gold because he said, "He finished the course." That's not true. He meant that he meant the course of running the race of life for Jesus Christ. And here in our passage today, Paul is focusing on running a long race and he's running to win the prize. The goal of the upward call of God and Jesus Christ. And in verses 12 and 14, we find some interesting words. Twelve:

¹²Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

And then 14:

¹⁴I press on toward the goal

He uses that terminology and that terminology is for winning a race. You've seen races. You've probably been in races. What do you do when you get near the goal, the finish line? You press forward. You stretch forward so you can get across the finish line. It's interesting that Paul used the term here that I may lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. That happened on the road to Damascus, where Jesus Christ laid hold of Paul. And Paul had bad things in his past. In fact, he was on his way to Damascus in order to arrest and persecute more Christians. He made a change. He made a turn. He made a repentance. And Paul knew very clearly as described here that he was saved for a purpose and that God had a plan for his life. And he was not going to be satisfied until he had laid hold of what Christ had laid hold of him for. Can you apply that to your life? Can I apply it to mine? That's the goal. That's the calling of God upon each one of us. And then verse 13 is our key verse. Verse 13 says this.

¹³I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,

Paul had just told him that he wasn't perfect. Paul knew that. And Paul was very clear here. He was saying to them, "One thing that I know." But you know, back in verse 12 there's something important. Paul had been a Christian for more than three years when he wrote this letter to the Philippians. He had many wins in his Christian life. He had victories and they viewed Paul as a spiritual giant. But what did Paul say here? He said he wasn't perfect. And he wanted the Philippians to clearly know that he had not yet gained it. That he wasn't there yet. That he was still working to lay hold of that for which Christ had laid hold of him. And he was going to finish that race and receive the eternal reward. He knew, though, something else that we all need to know, even as a Christian this morning. He knew that he still had to deal and was subject to temptation and to sin. Look what Paul wrote in Romans, Romans 7:15.

¹⁵For I do not understand my own actions.

You ever said that to yourself?

For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

And that's why he pressed on. That's why he knew that he would have a relationship that would last with Jesus Christ. And then in 13, the middle of that verse Paul says the one thing on how to live a life without regret and to overcome the past, to overcome those things that have gone wrong in my life and to put it behind us and to live in the freedom of Jesus Christ. That one thing is this little statement. It says:

Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

That's the answer. That's it right there. Forgetting. That means to cease remembering. And if Paul had not done that, he would not have had the relationship, the victories that God gave him. And Paul refused here to look behind, to look at the past, to look at both the good and the bad. Because, remember, Paul had approved the stoning execution of Stephen. And he was on his way to persecute more Christians when Jesus grabbed hold of him. We break the power and the regret of past wrongs by repenting, by forgetting, and living for the future. We can't change the past, but we can change the future with Jesus. And Paul understood very clearly forgiveness and he knew that came from one source. And we find in Hebrews 8:12 these words:

¹²For I will be merciful, forgiving, toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.

That's how Paul lived. That's how we are to live. When things that we've done wrong, when things that we've done wrong to the Lord or to others around us. That's so clear here. And Paul knew that. And Paul knew that. And it's like having a computer and God has a computer and when something we do gets on the screen, He knows where the delete button is. He's already deleted them, but we keep bringing things back or doing other things. He hits the delete button once and for all. And that delete button does not send it to the recycle or the trash bin or the hard drive. It's gone. It's gone forever. And that's what Paul meant here. That's how Paul could press on. He could forget. He could cease to remember those things that were in his past. You know what I found? It's much harder for us, really is, to hit the delete button and forget the past. But we cannot move ahead looking backward. It would be like driving your car in reverse all the time. And Paul wasn't going to do that. He was forgiven and it was forgotten and he could not press forward. We cannot live on past victories either. Paul had a lot of them when he wrote this. But we can also not become debilitated by regret and guilt and remorse, even, of the past wrongs. Even with other people. If we'd done what God asked us to do and we've done what we know He would want us to do, we're to bury those. We're to hit the delete button and let them go.

Remorse and repentance are the two choices, the two responses, that you and I have to a regret. And they are distinctly different. Paul describes those differences in 2 Corinthians 7:10; it's a great verse. Where it says for Godly grief, that means regret that is according to the will of God, produces repentance that leads to salvation without regret. Whereas worldly grief produces death.

I can't explain that any more clearly than how it is written. Because, you see, Godly grief, grief that is according to the will of God, leads us to salvation. It leads us to do what is right. But worldly response to regret leads to death and produces only remorse. And nowhere in scripture do we see the description or a contrast in lies of that Judas and Peter. Totally opposite; because in Judas, his response to the regret of what he had done led only to remorse. Last Sunday morning Chris talked about the motive behind Judas's betrayal. It was premeditated. Whereas with Peter, he's simply walking along and life had the betrayal come up in his wrong. He didn't intend for it to happen, but it did. But they dealt with it so differently. And Judas didn't go to Jesus. The only one who could forgive him and restore him. Matthew 27:3 through 5.

³Then with Judas, His betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴and he said this, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said to him, "What is that to us? See to it yourself!"

And that's what he tied to do.

⁵And after throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed and he went and he hanged himself.

It ended in death. And then we look at Peter. And in Matthew 21, it's a great encounter because Peter came to Jesus and Jesus came to Peter. And three times Jesus asked Peter, Peter, do you love me? And every time Peter said, "Lord, You know I do." But in the last one, it says that Peter was so grieved in his heart that he said, "Lord You know I love You." Jesus told him to "Feed My sheep." But He also told him something else. And at the very end in verse 19 Jesus turned to Peter and He said, "Follow Me." Well both Judas and Peter had betrayed Jesus. They both had the same wrong, the same sin. But only Peter is the one who repented and accepted Jesus would forgive and forget what he had done. And like Paul, Peter pressed on with his life with no regret, with no regret. And he did that one thing; forgetting what lies behind and pressing forward to what lies ahead. You know we can live so long in regret and guilt that we don't move ahead under the cleansing freedom of the blood of Jesus Christ on that cross. Living in regret, remorse, guilt is exactly where the enemy wants us to live. Even as a Christian, he doesn't want us like Paul, like Peter, to move on in life and press forward. You know, I sometimes think that, and I didn't wear a white shirt today, but I sometimes think we need to look at our lives like a white shirt. I was in Austin this past week. I had to wear a coat and tie the whole time. I had a beautiful, two beautiful, white shirts I wore. Absolutely clean before I went. When I got home I noticed they had some dirt on them. So Kathy took them to the cleaners. Well our lives are like that. We have been given a snow white life, but there are times where we stain it and we have to go to the cleaners. And the cleaners as it's explained quite effectively in 1 John 1:9. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to cleanse us from our sins and then do what? Cleanse us from all unrighteousness; to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He hits the delete button.

There are three things that I want you to understand this morning. One is that we don't have to live a life under regrets and under the cloud of regrets. That's not God's intention. It's not His plan. Because of what Jesus has done. And if we have handled correctly our relationship to others; be it children, grandchildren, parent, if we have done what we should have done by what God has

told us to do, we should have no regrets. We should forget it. We should cease to remember. And the second thing that I want you to understand this morning is this. That there is only one regret that cannot be forgiven. And that is the regret of rejecting Jesus Christ. But I want you to understand the beauty about God. And the third one is this. That our response and our choice to accept Jesus Christ is a decision that we will never regret; that we will never regret. Because, you see, all the regrets, all the wrongdoings are forgiven and forgotten. It's wiped clean. The delete button has been hit. It was hit the moment that we accepted Christ as our personal Savior. And I think that as we live the Christian life, we have to many times go back and look at what Paul said. Cease remembering, forgetting what lies behind and pressing forward to what lies ahead.

Pray with me.

Lord Jesus, You know our hearts this morning. And Lord there is no way that we can give You the thanks and the praise for what You've done for each one of us. And Lord thank You that we don't have to live in sin, we don't have to live with wrongdoings with other people, we don't have to live with regrets because You have provided a way for us to clean it up, for You to clean it up, and for us to cease remembering when the enemy keeps trying to bring it up. For us to do what Paul said, as for us to take hold of that for which You have taken hold of us and press forward in this race of life. Lord I pray that if there's someone here this morning that has never accepted Jesus Christ, that they will not leave this morning with the regret of not having done so. And I pray for myself and everyone here this morning, Lord, that when we do stumble, and we will, that we bury those regrets by doing what You would have us to do. And that we would forget them knowing that You've forgiven them and to live for You in this race of life.

Now this morning with your eyes closed, I pray that as the instrument plays, that if Jesus Christ is calling you to Himself, or if you have a decision that you need to get straight with Him, or if you need to ask for forgiveness to remove a regret, that whatever it is this morning that you will come and speak to one of our staff members and make the decision that God is laying upon your heart. Thank you. In Jesus name. Amen.