

No Regrets

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Did you know that there are 1,784 'ifs' in the Bible?

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray.

If you confess your sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you will be saved.

These are incredible promises and amazing 'ifs' but my personal favorite is Romans 8:31

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

God is for you every day in every way.

That's hard for us to believe and take in, in a world that is so often pitted against God's people;

in a world that is oppressed and beleaguered by wrong messages, in a world that make us slaves – rather than free people.

That's why I asked you a couple weeks ago to "camp out" in Romans 8 for awhile. How many of you have read it recently...meditated on it...and let it sink in.

Take your time in this chapter

Ever marinated a piece of meat. It takes time.

You can't just slap some teriyaki on the tri-tip and grill it if you want the flavors to sink into the meat and tenderize it.

It takes hours to marinate.

In fact Tuckaways award winning steak tip recipe reads, **“Let the steak marinate for at least 12 hours, so that the marinade can work its magic.”**

Have you spent at least 12 hours marinating in Romans 8?

What about half an hour a day for a month. – about 15 hours..

Can you do that so that the words of this passage can work their magic by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As I said before...**The goal is never to get through the Bible. The goal is to get the Bible through us.**

Once you get Romans 8 inside of you, deeply and you immerse yourself in it for awhile, it will change your life.

Now I titled this talk No Regrets, but the reality it, we all have regrets. I have plenty.

I had this great aspiration as a kid that I would be this amazing figure skater when I grew up. I would dream about it...I would act it out in the livingroom. I wanted to go to the Olympics.

The first time I ever took a lesson the teacher went to my Mom and said, “you’ve got a figure skater here” – I was three years old! One thing led to the other – I took lessons until I was seven years – and then because our family moved and other family stuff, I stopped. I had two years of not skating and when I went back when I was 11 I was way behind. And sometimes I would think, if only...if only...if only I hadn’t stopped skating...maybe my dream would have come true!

Do you have any regrets like that? Do you ever say to yourself...if only this...then that ...and it would have been so much better.

There are benign regrets and there are malignant regrets...There is a regret spectrum...I ordered pants the other day in the mail..and I got them and they were hideous.

They had stripes and a weird cut to them... And I thought, why did I even order these? A benign regret...

My husband often regrets what he orders in a restaurant all the time. I don't know why. But He covets my entrée. He keeps looking over at my food and what I am eating. And often he says to me, "I should have ordered that!"

Another benign regret.

On the other end of the spectrum, there is a profound sadness that can be caused by bad decisions or difficult circumstances that are out of our control and we wish we could go into the past and change it but we can't. It might be a divorce or maybe a mistake that cost you a job or your reputation.

Then you've got this thing called mid-life crisis. That's when your life doesn't quite measure up to what you thought it would be.

Then spiritually speaking, there is our guilt that comes from some of the sinful decisions that we make. If only...if only...if only...I hadn't done that...

So you've got all these different kinds of regrets. We all have them. The question is, how do we deal with them? I have some good news,

Guess what? They have already been dealt with.

They have already been dealt with at the cross. Hear this...**There is no regret that God cannot redeem.**

Mark Batterson, pastor and teacher said the following:

Repentance is a restraining order against regret.

And even though not all of our regrets stem from our failures or sin, the repentance may need to be about the regret itself...

Our regrets mean that we don't ultimately believe that God is in charge of our lives..and if only...this hadn't happened...then that could have happened...means that we don't really believe that God can transform the situation.

We have to confess that way of thinking, because the regret stems from our lack of faith in a God who redeems every regret.

So We don't have to wallow in the "if" of the "if only's". Rather, what we marinate in is the "if" of Romans 8 - "If God is for us, who can be against us."

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And we often stop right there. But verse 17 says

¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

The women's retreat, that I have heard wonderful things about, was all about who God is for us. The nature of the Lord.

Sometimes we reject God not for who he is, but for who we think he is.

And the whole purpose of the women's retreat was to remind everyone what scripture tells us about the nature of God. That's why it was called "I AM"...

Ultimately, God is a God who is *for you and He proved it at the cross*. He didn't come into the world to condemn the world. And that ties in with Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,

But I want to make a distinction here because all of this gets kind of confusing sometimes.

There is a difference between conviction and condemnation

Conviction is a good thing. The Holy Spirit does this in us...the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin.

Have you ever heard that phrase, “**God loves us just like we are but loves us too much to let us stay that way.**”

Conviction is that internal check from the Holy Spirit that says, “not good”...”not okay”...”change your course”.

Conviction by the Holy Spirit is kind of like those bumps you go over on the road when you are in the car (**image here**) when you get out of your lane. (da,da,da,da,da)

Decidedly uncomfortable, , gets your attention, corrects you... gets you back on course...back in your lane ...keeps you safe

Conviction by the Holy Spirit is sometimes uncomfortable like that,

We might feel it in our spirit where we think...this isn't right...or I am participating in something that if Jesus were standing here next to me, I would not feel good about.

And conviction, that voice, or feeling of being uncomfortable with something, corrects us when we move away from God.

Once we know what we are doing something that separates us from God, we can confess that, correct it, and move on.

Conviction is a gift to us, given by the Holy Spirit that basically tells us we are off course...conviction is an awareness of un-confessed sin.

Condemnation, on the other hand, is feeling guilt for confessed sin.

There was a woman, Jill who was reportedly seeing angels, and hearing God's voice quite frequently.

And she was a Catholic and the priest got concerned that she was having a nervous breakdown or something.

And so he tried to test her to see if these experiences were legitimate or not.

“Okay Jill. If you really are having all these spiritual experiences and hearing the voice of God, I want you to ask God to tell you what I said in the confession booth last week when I went to confession. Go ask God about it.”

Jill came back to the priest the next day and said, “God told me, he doesn’t remember.”

What happens when we confess our sins?

The book of Hebrews tells us that God doesn’t just forgive us, he forgets all about it.

I used to work in recording for the blind and it was in the old days, and I did this in a basement office...and there were all these reel to reel tapes...of readers – who would read stories and books for the blind so that they could listen to them

But people made mistakes in their reading...they’d cough, they sneeze, they’d pause for too long, they would mispronounce a word, they’d skip a page etc.

So, any time there was a mistake, and the reader on the tape messed up, I would just splice it out.

That was my job! Snip, snip...the mistake is gone!

That’s what God does when we confess.

He splices out the mistakes and the sins of our lives. He washes the whiteboard clean.

He expunges the data, he deletes the file that was “saved as SIN”. It no longer exists. Its not even encrypted anywhere.

It’s gone.

However, **There is a huge difference between God forgiving us, and us forgiving ourselves.**

And so even though we have been forgiven by the ultimate judge and authority – God himself – through Christ –

If we don't forgive ourselves the way God has forgiven us, we will live in a constant state of condemnation and regret.

And we might find ourselves confessing the same sin over and over again.

Ever done that?

Then God, who has forgiven us, and forgotten all about it says,

“Why are you reminding me of this, over and over. I had forgotten all about it. It's gone. I emptied that trash. You are my beloved one, and I've already taken care of it..”

Like that song In Christ Alone says, “**No guilt in life, no fear in death.**” That's how we're meant to live.

The enemy wants to remind you of everything you have done wrong over and over and over again so that all of your emotional energy is spent on guilt,

on past mistakes..on you and your failing

so that there is no energy left to serve God...be God's person...with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.

Does that make sense?

A speaker at our ECO national gathering said something that the pastors have kept quoting ever since.

He was talking about the Exodus – when God freed the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. They had been in bondage for 400 years. And that bondage mentality gets into the way you think, and act...

God delivers them in one day. They cross over the red sea into freedom in one day. Technically they are free...

But you know what?

They wander for 40 years after that because they are still acting like slaves. They hate Moses, and want to go back to Egypt to be again under whip.

Why? Here's the quote...Because even though **God got Israel out of Egypt in one day, it took 40 years to get Egypt out of Israel.**

The Hebrews still acted like slaves when they were free.

It took a long time to get the slave mentality out of those people...they didn't even know what freedom felt like. They had to get used to it...and it took time

When we live with guilt, condemnation and regret...we are slaves to the past.

But its hard for us to forgive ourselves the way God forgives us in Christ because the world constantly gives us a different message...

That's why marinating in Romans 8 is a good idea for us. We need this message...we need it so badly.

We need to get the Egypt out of us, and get the Holy Spirit into us to fully take in this passage, so that our joy might be complete.

Friends, hear these words

"If God is for us, who can be against us?...Who shall bring any charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who justifies who is to condemn. No One!"

We are a new creation in Christ. But, again as Mark Barriston also says, **It takes a while for the new nature to become second nature.**

Marinate in Romans 8. Memorize it.

Let it get inside of you so that you can live into your freedom and your forgiveness in Jesus Christ. No regrets.

PRAYER

AMEN