

REACH FOR THE FINISH LINE AND DON'T LOOK BACK!



One of the most emphatic statements made by every track coach, and some football coaches, is "Don't Look back." The sprinter does not have a problem with this...but the long distance runners do.

**Looking back will cost you in more ways than
you can imagine.**

With this in mind, I reflect and remember (very emphatically) an incident where "looking back" cost a young man a gold medal. In this incident, not only did it devastate this young man at the state track meet, it probably has cost him some great memories of yesteryear. Reflections of the event, regrets, reminders, and reminiscing about that last 5 yards has cost him at least 5 decimals on his lifespan. The "Looking Back Syndrome" has made its mark on the lives of many individuals.

In speaking with other people in my casual time with them, I hear the same words repeated:

"Gerald, have you ever looked back on your life and thought – If I only knew then what I know now, I would have done a lot of things different? As I look back on my life I have a lot of regrets. I have done

a lot of stupid things in my lifetime, and I made a lot of mistakes. I wish I could go back and change things...but I can't."

Luke 9:62, "Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." We need to learn to let those things go and live for the Lord today. ² Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

Remember:

- **All regret does is waste the present.**
- **You can't be useful to the Lord today if you're feeling sorry about the past.**

The Truth: God has used our past to help us become the people we are today.

He uses those past hurts, failures, and mistakes to strengthen us and to make us useful for His Kingdom.

Harry Truman (President of the United States during the end of WW II) said,

"Men who live in the past remind me of a small wooden bird called the 'Floogie Bird.' Around the Floogie Bird's neck is a label reading, 'I fly backwards, I don't care where I'm going. I just want to see where I've been.'"

Do you know why the past is called the past?

- *Because it's passed...it's gone, you can't live it today.*
- *There are people that spend a lot of time looking back at their past; some with joy, some with regret.*

God doesn't want us to live in the past.

The past is past, we must live life today.

If you want to truly experience the better life you've got to learn to live life today and take advantage of the opportunities you have today...or tomorrow you're going to regret today.

Let's look at what the Bible has to say about the past:

1. Don't Look Back On Past Sins

- *1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
- *Psalms 103 says, "He casts our sins as far as the east is from the west."*
- *Isaiah 43:25 says, "He remembers them no more."*

Satan wants us to remember and reflect on our past sins.

He wants us to be overcome by the past instead of OVERCOMING the past.

- **He wants to cause us to blame God and others for our shortcomings.**
- **He wants to keep the sinner from knowing God and His promises.**
- **He wants to hinder the Christian's service to the Lord.**
- **He wants us to feel unworthy to live a life in the positive.**
- **He wants us to ask ourselves, "How can God use me when I've been so sinful."**

The positive thing about remembering:

Remember from where God has brought us.

We were all at one time broken and useless to God, but He wants to mold us and make us useful once again.

If we will surrender our lives to Him, like clay in the hands of the potter, He will mold us and make our lives into a beautiful vessel.

Let Him have His way.

Don't let your past sins hinder you from serving God.

Hebrews 12:1-2, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."

The Truth: Our sins have been paid for by the precious blood of Christ and they are nailed to the cross.

Consider Charles Colson, the aide to Richard Nixon who was sent to jail for Watergate. As a result of his experience as a convicted felon, Colson founded Prison Fellowship, now the world's largest Christian outreach to prisoners and their families. Prison Fellowship has more

than 50,000 volunteers working in hundreds of prisons in 88 countries around the world. A ministry that has blessed millions of people got started about 30 years ago because Charles Colson committed a crime. God's eternal purposes for that man included even the sin that sent him to prison.

SIN for a better and more productive life is never the original plan of God for you or me.

- **When we fail, God starts working to get us back in the race**
- **Use your past to help minister to others.**

2. Don't Look Back on Past Defeats

We all have had some past defeats. We have all failed.

- *We have all tried to accomplish something only to fall short of our goals and objectives.*
- *Sometimes because of our past defeats we feel miserable, alone, and worthless.*

We look around and we can see people that have accomplished great things...and had great successes, and we wonder, "Why I am such a failure and they are such a success?"

The truth is successful people have failed just as much if not more, but they get back up and try again.

Unsuccessful people are the ones who refuse to get up and that's when they are defeated.

Philippians 3:12-14, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Defeat and discouragement come from dwelling on the past. You cannot ...You cannot ...No matter how hard you try...live yesterday over again.

The Scriptures tell us that God has forgotten our sins when we

confess and repent of them.

So, why should we bring them up again?

Peter Marshall put it this way, "Never let the past be so dear as to limit the future."

In other words...Maturity comes when we see the future with the King of Glory far outweighs our past accomplishments and failures.

The past has passed...so we must ...get past it. Run your race to the finish line...and don't look back!

And, one to grow on:

***"You can't drown in your sweat. Therefore, don't sweat the regrets."
Burma Shave***

Isaiah 40:29-31 "He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers yeah strength to the weak. Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will fall give up. But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint."

2 Timothy 4:7 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Proverbs 4:12, "When you walk, your step will not be hampered; and if you run, you will not stumble."

1 Corinthians 9:24-27, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to

get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." 2 Chronicles 15:7, "But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded."

