

Our past does not define our future



When we come to Christ we have a fresh
start to life

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a
new creation; old things have passed away;
behold, **all things** have become new.”

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

The moment we commit our lives to Christ;

- All of our sins are forgiven and forgotten by God
- We become part of God's family
- We have a unique plan and purpose for our lives that is full of purpose and meaning (Ephesians 2:10) (John 10:10) AND
- The Holy Spirit comes to live and dwell in our hearts and lives so that we have the power to live an overcoming life



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10)



- The bible makes it clear that we have a wonderful hope and future, not only in the life to come but during our time here on earth; **That God has a good plan for our future here on earth, no matter how many mistakes that we may have made in the past**

- Our upbringing, our educational level, our current circumstances and our age does not define our future when we give our heart to Jesus Christ



- The moment we come to Christ, God has a unique plan for our life that will come to pass if we simply remain faithful to what He has called us to do in life (Philippians 1:6)
- King David was Israel's greatest King. Before he was chosen by God to be Israel's next King he was a mere shepherd boy. TRULY OUR PAST DOES NOT DEFINE OUR FUTURE

King David wrote,

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, And **forget not all His benefits; Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, **who redeems your life from destruction**, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”**
(Psalm 103:2-5)



- The Lord delights in mercy. He enjoys giving us a new start after every failure and always gives people time to repent

In the book of Micah we read,

“Who *is* a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights *in* mercy.^[a] He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all ^[b]our sins Into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:18-19)



- In the gospel of John we see a woman from Samaria who had been married five times and who was now living with a man having a life changing encounter with Jesus Christ
- **Prior to meeting Jesus the woman from Samaria was a social outcast**
- However when Jesus spoke about the living water that He could give her she was totally transformed when He revealed that He was the Messiah (who is called Christ)



- **After this life changing encounter with Jesus this woman helped to bring revival to Samaria**

“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I *ever* did.” So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed ^[a]the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” **(John 4:39-42)**

... this is indeed
the Christ,
the Savior
of the world.

—John 4:42

- God has so much planned for every believer's life
- However to fully embrace all that God has planned for our life and future we must refuse to dwell on our past hurts and disappointments (and even successes - God has more in store for our future)
- Continually dwelling on our past failures and injustices and wrong decisions will sabotage our future



- **Putting the past behind needs to be an ongoing process**



- Daily we can experience setbacks or offences from others which can build up if we do not purposely put them behind us
- **It is so important that we start each day on a fresh footing**



- Letting go of the past enables us to fully embrace God's plan for our life



- The great Apostle Paul who was persecuting Christians before he encountered the Lord on the way to Damascus, knew that he could not dwell on his past mistakes if he was to fulfil God's destiny for his life
- He knew that he could not live with regrets if he was to become all that God had planned for his future



The Apostle Paul wrote, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, *forgetting* those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12-14)

- **From this passage of Scripture we can learn much**



- i) **We are all works in progress. None of us have arrived. We all can be continually used of the Lord even while we are growing in our faith**

The Apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” (Philippians 3:12)

- **God does not just use people that have it all together but simply people who are available and teachable**



ii) We must as Christians “PRESS on” and be over comers if we are to fully appropriate all that God has planned for our future

- We have a very real adversary, the Devil, who will consistently try and oppose us and prevent us from realising our God given destiny

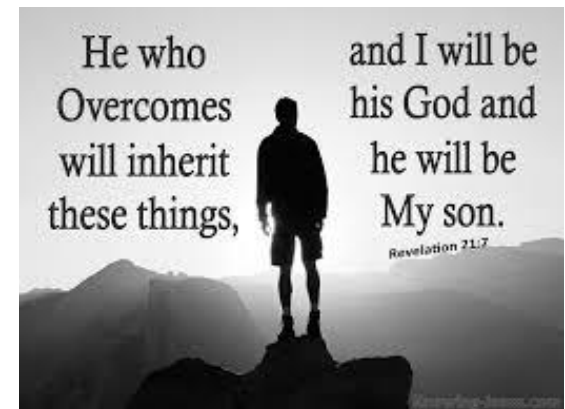


- We must choose to never give up on what God has planned for our future

In the book of Revelation we read the words of Jesus,

“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.” **(Revelation 2:26)** “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.” **(Revelation 21:7)**

- In a world full of temptations and challenges we need to daily choose to press on in the things of God



iii) The importance of pursuing God's plan for our life in the future. That we may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of us

- **God has the best plan for our life. We will never come second putting God first**
- True purpose and meaning in life comes from living for the Kingdom cause. For this reason knowing and following the will of God for our life is crucial.
- There is no safer place than being in the will of God for our life



**The Apostle Paul wrote, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”
(Ephesians 5:15-17)**



- **Given the increasingly lawless days that we are now living in, how important it is that we stay focused on following God's plan for our life in the days to come**

iv) We must purposely choose to let the past go. We must simply refuse to rehearse our hurts and keep looking back at our past mistakes and disappointments

This is why the Apostle Paul wrote, “... but one thing I do, *forgetting* those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,” (Philippians 3:13)

- No amount of dwelling on our past will change what has happened in the past. We can only learn from it and then MOVE on in life &



v) The importance of continually keeping our focus on things of the Kingdom and being committed to finishing our Christian walk strongly

- For those who love the Lord the best is yet to come

This is why the Apostle Paul wrote,

“...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13a-14)



- It doesn't really matter how we started in life, what really matters is how we finish in life and in our walk with the Lord

FINISH
STRONG



- For this reason we must not be distracted by the things of the past but be committed to finishing our walk with the Lord well *as we allow Him to direct our steps in life*

Like the Apostle Paul we want to be able to say at the end of our life,

**“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”
(2 Timothy 4:7-8)**



I will now quickly finish with some keys that can help us to let go of the past so that we can fully embrace the future that God has planned for our life

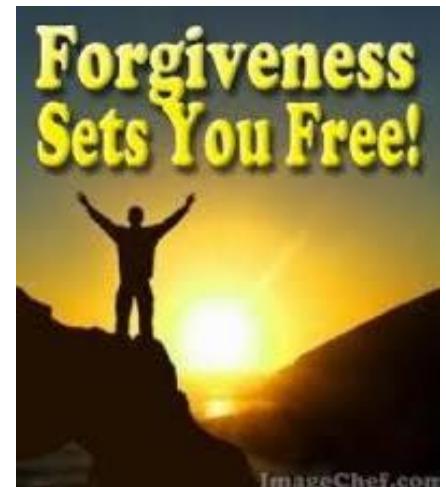
1) We must simply choose to make a once and for all decision to let go of the past and to forgive those who have hurt us



- We must simply refuse to live with regrets
- Letting go of the past frees us up to fully embrace the future that God has planned for our life *including new healthy relationships*

In the book of Isaiah we read, “Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:18-19)

- **Hanging on to past relational hurts and offences will negatively affect our future relationships. We must simply let the past go so that we can fully embrace the future that God has planned for our life**



- Forgiving those who have hurt us in the past is crucial if we are to fully embrace all that God has planned for our lives in the future

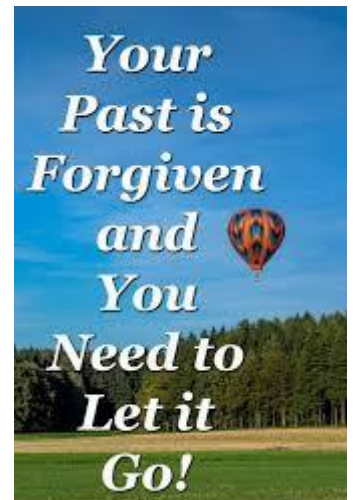


This is why Jesus Himself said,

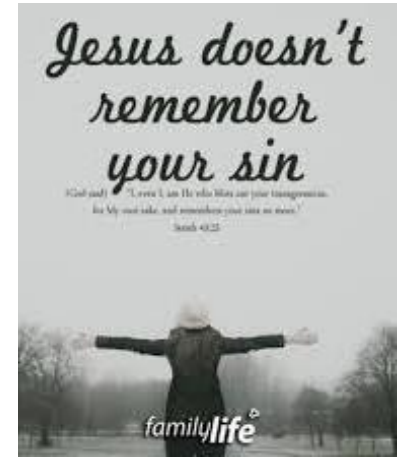
“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” **(Mark 11:25-26)**

2) As Christians we must just simply accept the fact that when we came to Christ ALL of our sins were forgiven AND forgotten by God

- As believers we do not have to live with shame and guilt from our past. The moment we repented of our sins and received Christ into our heart to be our Lord and Saviour, God forgave us of all of our sins
- So if God has forgiven and forgotten all of our past sins, we must not continually dwell on our past mistakes



**In the book of Isaiah we read,
“I, even I, am He who blots out your
transgressions for My own sake; And
I will not remember your sins.”
(Isaiah 43:25)**



**King David wrote, “As far as the east
is from the west, So far has He removed
our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12)**



- When we give our life to Jesus we must simply receive and accept God’s forgiveness, forgive ourselves and move forward to embrace the fullness of what God has planned for our future**

3) We need to continually keep our focus on what God has planned for our future

- **God's plan for our life progressively unfolds over time.** Continually involving God in our plans helps to keep us moving forward in our walk with the Lord



The Apostle Paul wrote, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Colossians 3:1-2)

- Keeping our focus on God's plan for our life and the things of God helps us to keep moving forward into all that God has planned for our future



Jesus Himself said,

“...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)



4) Having a clear God given vision and focus for our life



- Having a clear understanding of God's plan for our life helps to keep our focus on the future, especially during our tests and trials in life

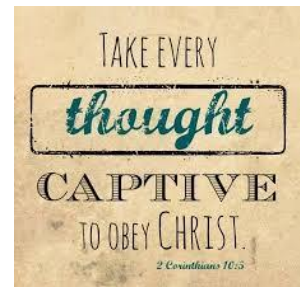
In the book of Proverbs we read,

“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; ...” (Proverbs 29:18)

- With no real God given vision for our future we are more likely to dwell on our past wrong choices and failures when experiencing trials

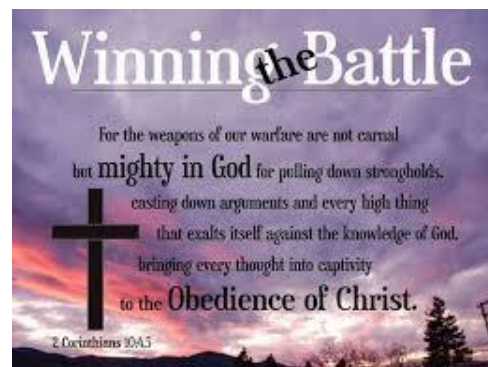
5) We must be quick to take all wrong thoughts captive before they take us captive

- The Devil will continually try to distract and discourage us in our walk with the Lord by putting negative thoughts in our mind
- In particular, if he can, he will try to place thoughts in our mind that get us to focus on our past mistakes and wrong choices
- We must always be quick to take all wrong thoughts captive and to replace them with Christ centred thoughts



This is why the Apostle Paul wrote,

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing **every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)**



6) We must not spend too much time in isolation.



- Have regular fellowship with other believers is crucial. We all need the encouragement of others to realise our full potential in Christ
- If the enemy can isolate us by getting us to withdraw from others, he is more able to get us to dwell on our past failures and to bring discouragement upon us



- The enemy is more able to get people to give up on God's plan for their life, and even their own life if he can isolate them and whisper words of defeat in their minds



The Apostle Peter wrote,

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” (1 Peter 5:8-9)

- **Having loving fellowship with other believers is a great key to growing in our faith and to realizing our full potential in Christ**

In the book of Hebrews we read,
“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” **(Hebrews 10:23-25)**



7) We must be careful not to associate with people who will continually bring up our past mistakes or encourage us to talk about them

- We must have good boundaries in our life and not allow into our circle of friends people who will continually try and get us to rehash our past failures
- We must heed the Apostle Paul's advice, "...but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind" (Philippians 3:13) if we are to move on in life and become all that God has planned for our life, **AND**



8) We need to spend quality time with God and in His word

The more time that we spend
with God and in His word:



i) The more our past will fade away

ii) The more healed and whole
we will become, and



iii) The more we will embrace the fullness of
life that God has planned for our future

In the book of Acts we read,

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13)

- The more time that we spend in God’s presence, the more we will be encouraged to fully appropriate all that God has planned for our future



- Spending quality time in God's word helps us to develop Kingdom thinking

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” **(Romans 12:2)**



- We need to build our lives based on what God says about our life and future in His word

In the book of Jeremiah we read,

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

- **When we seek God with all of our heart we have a wonderful future and hope. Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37)**



The Apostle Paul wrote,

“But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

Nor have entered into the heart of man

**The things which God has prepared for
those who love Him.”**

(1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

- **So may I encourage you in
conclusion to not let your
past stop you from fully embracing the future
that God has planned for your life**



- That if you have struggled to let go of some of the things of the past, that today you would make a decisive choice to do so, and
- That you would build your future based on what God says about your life in His word
- The bible makes it clear that our past does not define our future. The moment we come to Christ we have great hope and future

Building our lives



on the WORD OF GOD



- The Apostle Paul, who was initially persecuting Christians prior to being saved, went on to plant many churches during his three missionary journeys as well as writing a little over one quarter of the New Testament (28 percent).
HIS PAST DID NOT DEFINE HIS FUTURE

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,” (Ephesians 3:20)

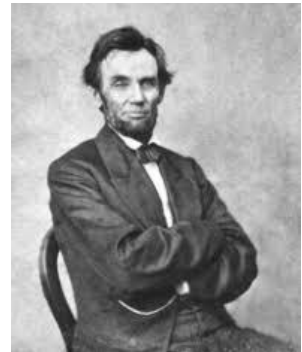


- I will finish by quickly looking at the life of Abraham Lincoln, a strong Christian who has been considered by many to be America's greatest president



- Both of Abraham's parents were members of a Baptist congregation which had separated from another church due to opposition to slavery
- Abraham's mother died when he was still young
- Abraham attended school at irregular intervals. In all he spent less than 12 months going to school, and he didn't attend college at all

- As Abraham grew up, he loved to read and preferred learning to working in the fields. This led to a difficult relationship with his father who was just the opposite. Abraham was constantly borrowing books from the neighbours.
- In 1828 Abraham's sister, who had married Aaron Grigsby in 1826, died during childbirth.
- Abraham moved to **New Salem**, Illinois, where he lived until 1837. While there he worked at several jobs including operating a store, surveying, and serving as postmaster. He impressed the residents with his character



- Abraham Lincoln, who stood nearly 6 foot 4 inches and weighed about 180 pounds, saw brief service in the Black Hawk War before making an unsuccessful run for the Illinois legislature in 1832
- He ran again in 1834, 1836, 1838, and 1840, and he won all four times
- Lincoln was a member of the Whig Party; he remained a Whig until 1856 when he became a Republican. Additionally, he studied law in his spare time and became a **lawyer** in 1836
- Lincoln most likely had a romance with a girl named **Ann Rutledge** however she sadly died in 1835



- In Springfield in 1839 Lincoln met **Mary Todd**. Three years later they were **married** and over the next 11 years had four children
- Abraham Lincoln became a successful attorney
- In 1846 Lincoln ran for the United States House of Representatives and won
- While in Washington he became known for his opposition to the **Mexican War** and to **slavery**. He returned home after his term and resumed his law practice more seriously than ever
- Early in 1851 Lincoln's father died



- During his life Lincoln also suffered from depression and had a number of nervous breakdowns
- Lincoln's declining interest in politics was renewed by the passage of the **Kansas-Nebraska Act** in 1854
- He made an unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Senate but received some support for the Republican vice-presidential nomination in 1856
- Abraham engaged in a series of **debates** with **Stephen A. Douglas** in 1858. Lincoln was against the spread of **slavery** into the territories but was not an **abolitionist**
- Douglas won the Senatorial race, but Lincoln gained national recognition



- Although **William Seward** was the pre-convention favourite for the Republican presidential **nomination** in 1860, Lincoln won on the third ballot



- Lincoln was **elected** the 16th president of the United States on November 6, 1860, defeating Douglas, **John Bell**, and **John C. Breckinridge**
- Abraham Lincoln was a strong believer who did not allow his failures and disappointments and early lack of education to define his future
- May I encourage you too today to not let you past stop you from fulfilling your God given destiny