



from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, 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, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:7-14)

Philippians is a letter written by Paul who is in prison. It is difficult to determine where he was in prison, though a long tradition has said he was in Rome. For our understanding today, it doesn't matter. But it does matter that this isn't some academic letter written from some cushy place. This is a prison letter. And the first thing we can see that Paul tells us to help our regret and to help us forgive ourselves is we need to...

## 1. Repent

The first step is to repent, and that means much more than saying, "I'm sorry." To repent means to want to do differently, to change your mind and your feelings and your actions. It certainly involves sorrow, but it involves sorrow, or even regret, that pushes us to seek forgiveness.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. (vs. 7)

Prior to this paragraph, Paul had listed a bunch of things from his past: things he gained from his parents, his pedigree, things he did himself, things that brought recognition and self-reliance, things everyone saw as good if not great. He now talks in business terms, profit and loss, assets and liabilities. And he takes all those things (profits; it is plural in the Greek, he adds all the things together) as loss (loss, it is singular; he lumps them together). Now, that is interesting. He doesn't say they were good things, and he is now moving on to better things. These were things that added value and happiness and success to his life on the earth. But now that he has met Christ, he has reinterpreted his success, and he doesn't say they were good but not great, he says they were loss. These things had been blinding him to his need for the true righteousness that comes with a relationship with Jesus. So, they were very bad things, and he is giving them up.

What is it he wants instead of such worldly success? It is spelled out powerfully: experiential knowledge of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. (Philippians 3:7-9)

Paul talks about investigating his past life, and he does it in three building statements. He uses a tense of the Greek word translated "consider" that reflects a thorough evaluation. 1) Whatever was good, to my profit, I consider loss. 2) Everything is a loss; 3) I consider them all rubbish. That is a nice way to translate that word, rubbish. It is, however, the same word for dung, waste, poo. It is also used for a half-eaten corpse. It is unspeakable filth. He considers both his good accomplishments and his bad mistakes as human waste.

Everything in his past compares poorly to what is important. He describes what is important in three



building ways: 1) gaining Christ (receiving salvation), 2) knowing Christ (intimate personal relationship), and 3) gaining or being given righteousness by Christ (more than moral; it is a declaration by the judge that you are free from sin and its penalty). This all comes by faith.

Paul is explaining the CORE OF SALVATION and its ongoing IMPACT. We find forgiveness and salvation only through repentance and faith that produces righteousness. It is implied here. Paul turned to God by repenting of all of his past. A part of what Paul gave up was his sin, and his sin was great. He had been a killer of Christians. Then, regret left. There is no regret when God makes us righteous. As believers, when we sin, we continue to confess and find that forgiveness, which leaves no regret. But we must repent.

Jennifer Knapp: She was a musician who found quick fame, and then she disappeared. Allegations were that she was a practicing homosexual. In a couple of recent interviews, she misuses the Bible in her quote about other cultural issues as a way of saying she can't really know what the Bible says about homosexuality. As one reporter said, "She didn't repent."

When asked, "What about what Scripture says on the topic?" Knapp answered: "The Bible has literally saved my life. I find myself between a rock and a hard place—between the conservative evangelical who uses what most people refer to as the "clobber verses" to refer to this loving relationship as an abomination, while they're eating shellfish and wearing clothes of five different fabrics, and various other Scriptures we could argue about. I'm not capable of getting into the theological argument as to whether or not we should or shouldn't allow homosexuals within our church."

She went on to say, "But I've always struggled as a Christian with various forms of external evidence that we are obligated to show that we are Christians. I've found no law that commands me in any way other than to love my neighbor as myself, and that love is the greatest commandment. ... If God expects me, in order to be a Christian, to be able to theologically justify every move that I make, I'm sorry. I'm going to be a miserable failure."

Mark Allan Powell, author of the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music* and a professor at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, said that Knapp's situation is different from previous scandals/controversies in Christian music because Knapp has not confessed to any sin: "In all of those instances, the guilty party admitted that they had failed to live in accord with God's will," says Powell. "Those were simply cases of Christian artists failing to be the role models that one would hope they could be. The situation with Jennifer is comparable to that of Ray Boltz [who came out in 2008] and (most of all) Marsha Stevens [who came out in 1979] because she does not regard her lifestyle as inappropriate."

Craig Detweiler, a pop culture expert and associate professor of communication at Pepperdine University, noted that Knapp's revelation was "fascinating" in that it's "not in the form of a confession or asking for forgiveness. It is much more of an open declaration that does not include any form of apology or regret." (captured 4-23-2010; <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/music/news/2010/knappmedia.html?start=3>)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Last week I told you about my struggle to turn in my coupon for a free Coke from Sonic after I received the free Coke. I laughed this week when I received in the mail from one of you a Sonic Gift Card for some free Cokes from Sonic. I'm not sure if you were being fun or just very kind. I thank



you, whoever you are. I realized that my repentance was rewarded. This week, I would like you to know I have been tempted to not turn in my coupon for a new flat screen TV. Ha.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, 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, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:10-14)

Here we can see our second step:

## 2. Reject

How we think, shapes who we are. That is why we are told to think on what is good and true (Philippians 4:8 uses the word "dwell," which means to inhabit as one abode; it is where your thoughts hang out), and we are to form friendships with people who speak about the values we want.

Joke: I heard about his kid who was tossing a baseball up and trying to hit it. He said to himself, "I'm the greatest ball player ever!" and then he swung and missed. Refusing to be deterred, he did it again and said, "I am the greatest baseball player ever." He missed the ball again. After trying a third time and hitting nothing but air, he confidently proclaimed, "I'm a great PITCHER."

Of course, you are what you think you are is NOT totally true. Genetics, culture, environment, influence of our parents all play a part, but if we want any hope of changing years of bad habits, negative attitudes, feelings of regret, we must get positive, constructive patterns of thought.

The first step to doing that is to repent, but then we must reject the wrong thinking patterns. Repentance leads us to a new reality, forgiveness. Now, forgiven, we have no need to regret. God has forgiven us and he can correct the situation. It is time to quit living in the past. We must reject those old, beat-myself-up thoughts.

Paul says we must completely forget what is behind. A part of that is the good that we have done. Dwelling on past achievements often keeps us from doing more. But it also means forgetting what we have failed at in the past; for Paul, being a persecutor of Christ's church must have been on his mind. Remembering and continuing to dwell on our past mistakes and sin can paralyze us. Can you imagine, God calling Paul and having this tremendous mission for him to do, but he kept getting stuck in depression and paralysis as he said, "Oh, but I messed up a few years ago and it was a baaaaad, mess up"?

Imagine looking in the rearview mirror while driving forward. How hard would that be to do? That is what the enemy wants us to do. He wants us to stay anchored to the past, thinking about it, dwelling on it. It is impossible to move forward and focus on the past. We must reject it.

Step one was repent. And if we want to live without regret, we must do step two: reject.

There is a THIRD step that helps us move past simply rejecting the past. It helps us in rejecting the



bad thoughts, and it moves us into the right thoughts that will build the right character and move us in the right direction. We not only FORGET, but we FOCUS on the future goal. Let's call this...

### 3. Replace

We must gain the right thoughts, goals, and attitudes.

A major cause of regret is selfishness. Think about it. I do something and there are consequences and, what? I don't like them, so I get sad. I feel badly. I wish I could do it all over again.

But what if I change who is the judge and I allow someone else to worry about the results and I let someone else determine the mission? What if I give it all to God?

Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

"Goal" is the goal marker; it is what the runners set their eyes on as they ran the race. For Paul, and we can see that in context here, it was probably the model of Christ, his life, death, and resurrection. Paul's goal was to become like Christ. He also knew that was God's goal for him and God was actively involved in bringing that about. So, no matter what the past, good or bad, trophies or regrets, no worries, just keep going to the goal.

The goal would be to experience all of Christ and to become like him. There is a tremendous joy in the process of living on mission for Christ, but Paul knew the ultimate would be when he was resurrected, called up into heaven, where he would be totally transformed. That transformation would not be limited to his sins or his mistakes; he would experience it fully. And that knowledge, along with the joy of the earthly process, drove him to forget the past, and forgive himself, and keep going.

You need to replace your goal with the right goal. Get rid of the selfish one and strive toward the Christian one. With it, there are no regrets.

That also means you need to replace the negative images of God or yourself or this life or whatever it is that is holding you back. And here is how you do that. You learn the right thoughts, the right ways, the truth, which is found in God's Word.

It may be a good thing to memorize the Bible, certainly to meditate on it (see Psalm 1).

Song: Walk On

### 4. Remember

Closing Video: The Lion King. In this video clip, King Mufasa appears in the sky to his son. He tells his son with powerful words, "You have forgotten who you are." He says, "You are more than who you have become." And he prompts him to, "Remember who you are. You are my son." (You can see it here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIMbzKbDge4>)

This scene helps us recall our King, Jesus Christ, and how much he sacrificed so that we could be forgiven and become who he wants us to be. It is never too late to become who you were meant to



be.

Closing:

If you know of things in your past for which you want forgiveness, you can receive that today. If you know of things in your past that you want to forgive yourself for, you can truly do that today. If you are tired of living below the call to be who you are suppose to be and you are ready to be free, then why not experience freedom today?

I must tell you this. If you are not a Christian, your sins are not forgiven. You must receive salvation, and then forgiveness comes. Do not expect to forgive yourself if God does not. That is your mission. Become a Christian by admitting to Jesus that you are a sinner. Ask him to forgive you. Tell him you believe he is the Son of God and that he died as a sacrifice for you and came back from the dead. Commit your entire life to him, and he will forgive you and make you his child.

If you are a Christian, listen to me.

You are free from your past.

Your sins have been redeemed.

Your mistakes have been pardoned.

Today, in this moment, you are righteous, forgiven, justified, atoned for by God.

You are a new creation; you have the divine nature within you.

You are a conqueror. You are a winner.

You are no longer under a curse; no longer controlled by darkness.

You are free.

You are light, you are salt, you can overcome every temptation.

It is a new day.

Your sins are as far as the east is from the west. You will never give an account of what you have done. It is erased; and you are not guilty, you are not condemned, and you never will be, thanks to God's grace and your faith.

You are free.

It is time to believe you are free.

You are called.

It is time to live into your calling.

You are loved.

It is time to love yourself.

You are not a mistake, or failure, or a nobody.

You are the son of the King, you are wonderfully made, you are on a journey to victory and never defeat.

