

## Concerning The Things That Are Past

Have you ever stopped to think about why you are who you are, why you live where you live, or why you do what you do? Have you ever thought about how one decision could have changed your life for the better or for the worst? It is a fact that if you are a Christian, you are who you are because of the choices you have made. People make good decisions and people make bad ones, too. The man who sits on the side of the road begging for money may often think of how foolish he was before he ended up in the situation of having to beg. He may remember how he used to make fun of the people who told him how important it was to make the right decisions and work hard; but now he is paying for it. All the people in torment in Hades right now are living, and will forever have to live, with what they did, or in some cases, did not do (Matthew 25:31-46). They will remember all the time spent doing things for themselves, heaping up riches, despising others and neglecting God's divine word.

What about us, though, who are still living in the present? We all have made bad decisions from time to time, so how do we deal with this? I can think of no better example than that of the apostle Paul, who was truly a wicked person as a persecutor of Christians (Acts 8:1-3). This was something that he was very ashamed of after he became a Christian. We can see this in his letter to Timothy in which he calls himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). He also said in Philippians 3:13-14, *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the upward high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* Paul tried to forget about what he had done and pressed on toward better living. Even though he mentions forgetting what he did in the past, I really do not think he was able to forget them completely. He must have remembered all the people he had hurt in the past, knowing he could not undo any of it. Although we may have repented and been forgiven of past sins we have committed, there are still consequences we may have to deal with for the rest of our lives.

David is another example of this in his sin with Bathsheba. Even after he was forgiven by God, he had to live with the consequences of his sin. We remember that the child Bathsheba bore to David was struck by God and died. Not only this, but David felt regret for what he had done, even long after he had been forgiven. Psalm 51 shows just how deeply sorry he was for what he had done and how much he regretted it: *"Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your loving-kindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my*

*iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight-That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge” (Psalm 51:1-4).*

The best way to have peace of mind through all of this is by realizing that you can be completely forgiven by God if you have obeyed the gospel and have become a Christian. If one has already become a Christian and has fallen back into sin and wishes to be forgiven, he must confess his sins and repent of them, asking God for forgiveness. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). It is such a blessing knowing that we can forget about everything that we have done wrong in the past, knowing God has forgiven us and has forgotten too!

Jonathan Glaesemann