

### Sermon: Fogettaboutit!!

There was a boy in church who wasn't feeling well. He said to his mom, "Mom, can we leave now?" "No, she said, the service isn't over yet." The boy replied, "But I'm sick to my stomach." So the Mom said, "Then use the bathroom at the back of the church and come right back." The boy got up and after about sixty seconds, came back to his seat. The Mom said "Did you throw up?" and the boy answered "Yes." "Well, how could you have gone all the way to the back of the church and returned so quickly?" the Mom questioned. The boy said "I didn't have to go to the back of the church Mom, they have a box in the narthex that says, "For the Sick."

Today I want to talk about another kind of sickness called regret. Some of us are carrying burdens and regrets that Jesus never meant for us to carry. Things that He died for, 2000 years ago. Things that He would be glad to forgive and forget if only WE could do the same.

We're going to look this morning at some of the unhealthy things we do with our regrets. Then we're going to see how to break free from them, forever.

The first unhealthy thing that we tend to do with our regrets is to minimize them. Teens may think, "Ah, that wasn't so bad, lots of people lie to their parents. Mom doesn't need to know EVERYTHING I did last night. I'll tell her what she *wants* to hear. It's no big deal."

But just because YOU say it's no big deal doesn't mean that GOD says it's no big deal! God says IT *IS* A BIG DEAL! How do we know that? Proverbs 6:16 says that there are six things the Lord hates, and seven that are detestable to Him. The second thing on that list is a lying tongue! If God says in His word that something is a sin, then it is a sin! You CAN'T minimize it.

The second unhealthy thing that we tend to do with our regrets is to bury them. About 15 years ago, an NBA player got in trouble for choking his coach. He said "I want to apologize to the fans. It was an unfortunate incident. I just want to put it behind me and move on with my life."

How about "NO!!! You aren't ready to put it behind you, because you haven't LEARNED from it yet! Apologize to the coach! Pray to God. Take anger management classes. Accept the discipline of the NBA. And THEN you'll be ready to put it behind you." But this guy wanted to skip all that stuff.

We need to forget about past mistakes, but not until we learn from them. James 5:16 says "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." You might need to sit down with your wife and say "Lord, I flew off the handle last night. I was WAY too hard on my kids yesterday. Help me to say the right thing when I apologize this afternoon."

Another unhealthy thing we tend to do with our regrets is to blame others. "If my wife had treated me with a little more respect & a little more understanding, then maybe I wouldn't have needed to have had an affair. She drove me into the arms of another woman! It was HER fault!"

Blaming other people for our problems goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Do you remember in Genesis 3 when God asked Adam, "Have you eaten from the tree I told you not to?" And do you remember what Adam said: "The woman YOU put here with me, she's the one who made me do it! It's her fault Lord, not mine. I was just minding my own business."

It all goes back to whether or not you're man enough to take responsibility for your actions, to say, "Hey. I've got no one to blame but myself."

Now, I'm not proud of this, but I'm going to share it with you anyway. When I was a kid, I used to fight with another kid down the street. He'd start crying and say "Mom, Wally hit me!" And my mom would say "Wally, go to your room." I'd say "Why should I go to my room????! He started it!" Her replay? "Because you're the older kid. You need to take responsibility for your own actions." That was like a broken record in my family. "You need to take responsibility for your actions." Bla bla bla bla. I hated hearing that! I still hear it in my dreams. But over the course of time, those words worked their magic on me. And even though I'm FAR from perfect, I now DO try to take responsibility for my actions.

That's what the apostle John is telling us in today's scripture reading. In verse 7 he talks about the fellowship we can have with God if we take responsibility for our actions, then in verse 8, about the FORGIVENESS we can have with God if we take responsibility for our actions. If you want to break free from the regrets of the past, then there are three things we absolutely must do.

Number one: We need to acknowledge that we've sinned. Verse 8 says that "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

There's a story in Mark 10 about a rich young man who says to Jesus "What must I do to obtain eternal life?" Jesus says "You know the commandments - do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honour your father and mother." The young man said "All these I have kept since I was a boy."

Tell me I'm not the only one in the building this morning thinking, "GET OUT OF HERE! YOU'VE KEPT EVERY SINGLE COMMANDMENT SINCE YOU WERE A BOY?" How many of you have kept EVERY SINGLE COMMANDMENT ever since you were little? How many of you have NEVER talked back to your parents, have NEVER fought with your brothers and sisters, and have ALWAYS told the truth? There's only one person in the world like that. His name was Jesus. The rest of us ... not a chance!

The Bible says "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If you messed up, you need to admit it before God. It takes a big person to do that.

I gave President Obama credit a few years ago; people were all upset about AIG executives getting all that bonus money. People are still upset about it. But the President took responsibility. He said "Some people are ready to blame Congress. Some people are ready to blame the corporate executives. But you know what? You need to look no further than right here. I should have looked into this before I agreed to give AIG the money. I'm sorry." I was so glad he manned up and confessed. We need to admit our sins and our regrets to God.

The second thing we need to do is to accept God's total forgiveness. Verse 9 says that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness." When you confess your mess to God, He forgives ALL of it!

You say "Wally, when I was a kid, I stole some money from my mom's purse. I think she knew about it. It still haunts me to this day. I have never been able to forgive myself."

It may be too late to apologize to your mom or pay her back with interest, but bringing your unresolved feelings to God will entitle you to His total forgiveness. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness.

When I was in high school, I had a math teacher I didn't like. His name was Mr. Emerson. At the end of my final year, I wrote him a note that said that I and another friend thought he was a jerk. He wrote a note back, to my parents of course, saying "I am disappointed in Walter's cowardly behavior. I always liked him and thought the world of him. To get this note from him is truly a letdown." My parents made me apologize. But I felt guilty about it for years. I could never forgive myself for being so stupid, so uncaring. Years later, I went back to my old high school reunion. And guess who I saw in the teachers' lounge? Mr. Emerson! My heart was pounding! I went up to him and said "My name is Walter Mayhew & I am so sorry for the letter I wrote back in the sixties. I was stupid. I was immature. Please forgive me!" And then I held out my hand. He shook it and said "Mayhew, I have no idea what you're talking about!" All that time, I was beating myself up over a sin that was forgiven and forgotten years ago!

Some of you are doing the same thing that I did. You're beating yourselves up over something that happened a long time ago. And when you get to heaven, God's going to say "I don't know what you're talking about." How do I know that? Because Hebrews 10:17 says that "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." God's going to say "I don't know what you're talking about!" When God forgives, he forgives and forgets.

And the third break-away from the regret of our past actions? Remember that Jesus will always be there for you. Verse 2 of our scripture reading says that when we do sin against God, Jesus comes alongside us and speaks to God in our defense. He says "Yes, this person sinned against You! But he confessed it. And I died for it! I paid the price with my blood on the cross!"

You may think "How long will Jesus keep doing this for me? What if He gets tired of forgiving me? What if He says "Oh no, not You again!?!?" Well friends, that is never going to happen - 2 Timothy 2:13 says "When we are faithless, He remains faithful!" God will never stop loving you. He'll never leave you or forsake you!

You don't have to feel guilty or have any regrets in your life. All you need to do is admit your sin, accept God's TOTAL forgiveness, and remember that Jesus will always be with you.

Jesus loves us, this we know, for the Bible tells us so. AMEN