

Trusting God in Adversity



Introduction

In our last lecture, we conducted a study of James 1:5, where the brother of the Lord and the leader of the church in Jerusalem began his letter by exhorting his fellow believers to ask God for wisdom when they encounter various trials. “If,” he said, “any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” As we are praying for this wisdom and asking God to answer our “why” questions, we also need to be aware of a powerful enemy that seeks to sap us of our joy and kill our motivation and the will to move forward into all that the Lord has for us in the future. That enemy is *regret*, and is a first-rate robber who keeps his victims in bondage and refuses to set them free.

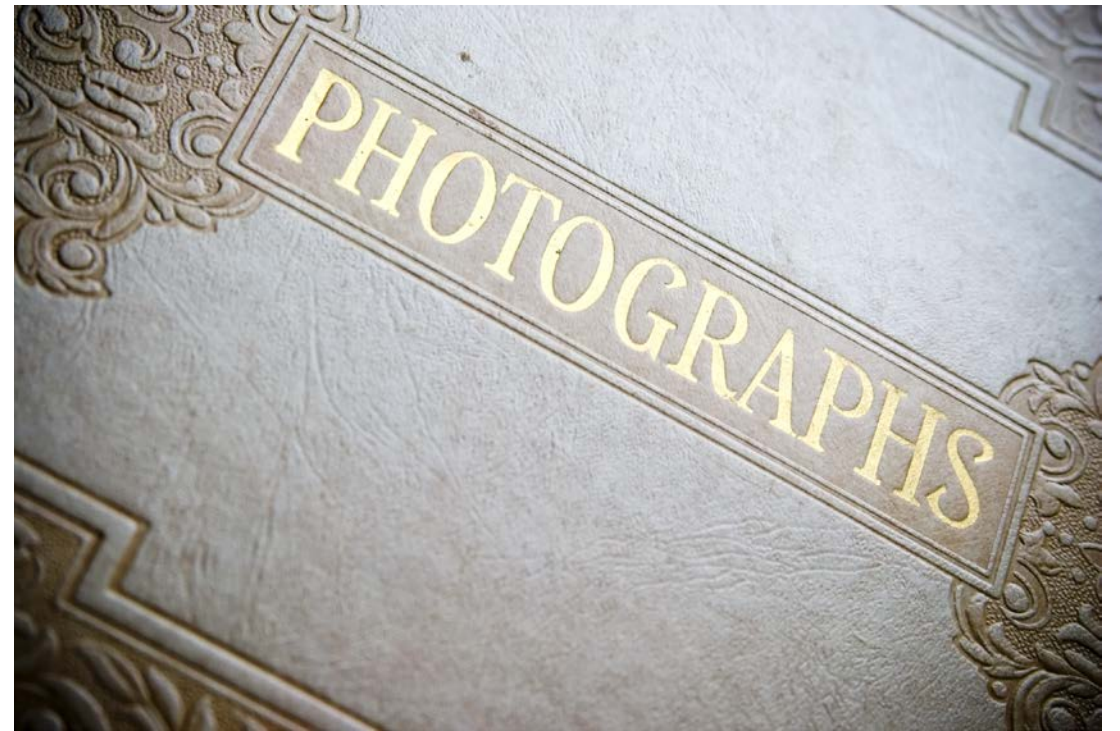
Life As A Motion Picture



“A motion picture contains many picture frames, each slightly different from the one before and after, which run by fast enough on a screen to be indistinguishable from each other. The viewer sees the motion of the frames, not the individual frames themselves – unless of course, the projector runs slow enough for the viewer to see one frame after the other

The Action Stops

or unless it freezes on just one frame, in which case the action stops altogether and the motion picture becomes a snapshot. We live life as if it were a motion picture. Loss turns life into a snapshot. The movement stops; everything freezes. We find ourselves looking at picture albums to remember the motion picture of our lives that once was but can no longer be found.”



Looking Back

“Regret is an unavoidable result of loss, for in loss we lose the tomorrow that we needed to make right our yesterday or today. Regret is especially bitter because we are deprived of the very context – relationship, job, or whatever – that is needed to reverse the failure and set a new course before it is too late. Regret is bad because it is irreversible.”



Regret

- **Regret** (1), *n.*, “sorrow, distress, or disappointment due to some external circumstance or event” (OED).
- Illustration: “Several residents today expressed their regret at the probable destruction of this picturesque piece of country” (*The Times*).
- **Regret** (2), *n.*, “sorrow, remorse, or repentance due to reflection on something one has done or omitted to do” (OED).
- “All wise men look back with regret upon those actions of their lives...in which they have reason to see themselves mistaken” (Daniel Defoe, author of *Robinson Crusoe*).

Regret in *The Faerie Queen*

Who when her eyes she on the dwarf had set
And saw the signs that deadly tidings spake,
She fell to ground for sorrowful regret,
And lively breath her sad breast did forsake.
Yet might her piteous heart be seen to pant and quake.



PENGUIN CLASSICS

EDMUND SPENSER

The Faerie Queene

Wendy's Regrets



The Peter Pan Statue
Kensington Gardens, London
Erected April 30, 1912

“The children often spent long summer days on this lagoon, swimming or floating most of the time, playing the mermaid games in the water, and so forth. You must not think from this that the mermaids were on friendly terms with them: on the contrary, it was among **Wendy's lasting regrets** that all the time she was on the island she never had a civil word from one of them.”

- J.M. Barrie

One of C.S. Lewis' Regrets



C.S. Lewis

1918 at age 20

Letter written to his father on October 28, 1922:

“I very often regret having chosen a career which makes me so slow in paying my way [at Oxford University]: and, on your account, would be glad of a more lucrative line. But I think I know my own limitations and am quite sure that an academic or literary career is the only one in which I can hope ever to go beyond the meanest mediocrity.”

Another of Lewis' Regrets

“No, my change of address does not imply retirement – or at least retirement from academic life; what has happened is that Cambridge has given me a Professorship. **In many ways I regretted leaving Magdalen,** but after nearly thirty years of the tutorial grind, I shall appreciate the less strenuous life of a ‘Chair’ at Cambridge.” I am now settling in there, and think I shall be happy: many of my colleagues are Christians, more than was the case in my old College.”



C.S. Lewis
1898-1963

A Major Cause of Regret



“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang” (1 Tim. 6:10).

Numerous Pangs (I Tim. 6:10)

- Guilt
- Envy
- Unrest/misery
- Boredom
- Dissatisfaction
- Depression
- Bewilderment
- “If onlys”
- Deprivation
- Despair
- Stagnation
- Immorality
- Hatred
- Self-pity
- Binges
- Emotional captivity

Causes Of Regrets: A Partial List

- Refusal to reconcile
- Habitual sin
- Addiction
- Wandered from the faith
- Rejected wise counsel
- Divorce
- Materialism
- Wasted time
- Workaholism
- Longstanding bitterness
- Would not listen
- Bad habits
- Ignored warnings
- Ambition
- Lack of self-discipline
- Poor choices

What do you regret?





Is Redemption Possible?

- “*People* with regrets can be redeemed, but they cannot reverse the *loss* that gave rise to the regrets” (Sittser).
- Own the past. Let go of the loss. Roll it over on the Lord.
- Embrace God’s plan for you in the present and moving forward. “Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead” (Phil. 3:13).
- Trust God’s sovereignty.
- Embrace the fact that “we cannot change the situation, but we can allow the situation to change us” (Sittser).
- Ask God to forgive you.

“And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

