

With God's help, our future can be better than our past

All of us have some good things and some bad things we can remember. In exceptional cases, one person's life may have been so filled with unpleasantness that he is tempted to say life has not been good at all; and in other cases a person's life may have been so joyful most of the time that he cannot identify with the problems others have faced. In the long run, however, most of our lives end up being about equal: we have some sunshine and we have some rain. The trick is to have the proper perspective on both the good and the bad that we have experienced, so that our future is what God wants it to be. We need to believe firmly that *with God's help, our future can be better than our past*. Neither our pleasant memories nor our painful ones should hold us back from the future that God wants us to have.

The apostle Paul was no doubt thankful for the many blessings he enjoyed in his younger years. Still, when he thought about his life prior to becoming a Christian, the thing that seems to have stood out most in his memory was the fact that he had actively persecuted the Lord's church. He said, "For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Cor. 15:9). Yet having obeyed the gospel, he had the right attitude: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me" (1 Cor. 15:10). Paul was a man who thought humbly about the past and thought courageously about the future.

We need to learn from the problems we have had, so that they help (rather than hinder) our future progress; and we need to be grateful for the good things that have come our way, without becoming complacent about them. The future will not be what it should be if we fall prey to discouragement about our defeats or to pride about our privileges. Whatever may have gone before, the Lord wants us to press ahead to the better tomorrow that He has in store for us. Today is the day to be working for that tomorrow. This week, let's think about how God wants us to use the past — whether good or bad — to help us become more faithful servants in the days ahead. Let's help ourselves and our children to have the right attitude about the past.

Monday: Ecclesiastes 7:10

Key Idea: It is not wise to let good things in the past hinder us in the present.

Questions for Family Growth: Why do we usually think "the good old days" were better than today? Why do you think Solomon said it is foolish to think about the past in this way? What should be our attitude toward the good things we have experienced?

Wisdom for the Day: Proverbs 20:15.

Tuesday: Matthew 27:3-10

Key Idea: It is not wise to let bad things in the past hinder us in the present.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Judas do about the sin he had committed in betraying the Lord? What should he have done instead? Is there any sin that God cannot forgive? What should we do once God has forgiven us?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 20:16](#).

Wednesday: Luke 19:1-10

Key Idea: God wants to forgive the mistakes we have made and help us to do better.

Questions for Family Growth: If Zacchaeus was a typical tax collector of that day, what kind of man might he have been before he met Jesus? After he met Jesus, what changes did he make? What did Jesus say to him in [vv.9,10](#)? What did Jesus come to do for the lost?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 20:17](#).

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 15:9,10

Key Idea: When God gives us the opportunity to do better, we ought to take advantage of it.

Questions for Family Growth: What had Paul done in the past that he was now ashamed of? What is the “grace of God,” and what had it done for Paul? What did Paul do in return? What was Paul’s attitude about the future?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 20:18](#).

Friday: Philippians 3:7-16

Key Idea: With God’s help, we ought to try our best to make each day better than the last.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to “press on” toward heaven? What can happen if we do not forget the things that are behind? What are some practical ways we can “reach forward” ([v.13 NKJV](#)) to the things that are ahead?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 20:19](#).

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