

## Thinking correctly about the past helps us serve God more faithfully in the present

Past, present, future. Having a good perspective on these three concepts is important if we are to be the people God wants us to be. In particular, we need to make sure our attitude toward the past is one that does not hinder us in the Lord's work. Foolish thoughts about the past are counterproductive, but thinking rightly about it is a great benefit. ***Thinking correctly about the past helps us serve God more faithfully in the present.***

All of us have made mistakes that are painful to remember. Looking back, we see things that we wish were not a part of our personal history. The good news, however, is that adopting a proper perspective on these things can be a tremendous motivation to leading a godly life.

The apostle Paul's life illustrates how this process can work. Before obeying the gospel, Paul had been such an adversary of the truth that he had actively persecuted the Lord's church. He seems to indicate that he had been a party to the execution of some of the earliest Christians (**Ac. 26:10,11**). No doubt this activity caused Paul great shame and remorse when he looked back on what he had done. But not all kinds of shame are the same. The emotion Paul felt did not cause him to wallow in self-pity or negative guilt. Instead, the "good" shame that he felt moved him to be genuinely humble and thankful for the Lord's forgiveness. And his humility and gratitude moved him in the positive direction of useful service to Christ.

Listen to Paul in **1 Cor. 15:9,10**: "I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 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." These are the sentiments of a person with a good perspective on the past — and also the present and the future.

This week, let's concentrate on developing the same perspective that Paul had. Whatever regrets we may have — and all of us have some — let's choose to look at those things in such a way that we will be more greatly motivated to serve God faithful and gratefully the rest of our lives.

### Monday: Ecclesiastes 7:10

**Key Idea:** It is foolish to inquire why the past was better than the present.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are some ways we often think the "former days" were better than the present? What is the attitude about the past that we are warned against in this passage? How should we think about the past?

**Wisdom for the Day:** **Proverbs 19:3.**

## Tuesday: Psalm 32:1-11

**Key Idea:** When past sins have been forgiven, we can experience joy and gladness in the present.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What description is given of the person whose sins have not been forgiven by the Lord? What difference is made in our lives by the experience of forgiveness? How should we think about our past sins?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 19:4](#).

## Wednesday: Hebrews 6:10-12

**Key Idea:** Work done for the Lord in the past is not sufficient for the present.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What does this passage say God does not overlook or forget? In [v.11](#), what “earnestness” or “diligence” are we instructed to have? In [v.12](#), who are those who “inherit the promises”?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 19:5](#).

## Thursday: 1 Corinthians 15:9,10

**Key Idea:** Thinking correctly about the past makes us more diligent servants of Christ.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What had Paul done in the past that was sinful? Do you think the memories that Paul had were painful when he thought about them? How did Paul choose to think about his past? What did gratitude for the grace of God cause him to do?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 19:6,7](#).

## Friday: Ephesians 5:15-17

**Key Idea:** We ought to use each day wisely, redeeming the time.

**Questions for Family Growth:** In what sense is it true that “the days are evil”? What does it mean to “redeem the time” (NKJV)? Why is it important to use wisdom in the way we live our lives in the present?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 19:8](#).

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