

The God Of 'Should Have's' And 'If Only's'

Phil 3:13 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.

Luke 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

Robert J. Hastings, well-known and often quoted author, made this statement in his now-famous essay The Station:

- “It isn’t the burdens of today that drive men mad. Rather, it is regret over yesterday or the fear of tomorrow. Regret and fear are twin thieves who would rob us of today.”

Life is lived, sometimes regrettably, one moment at a time.

- However, life is far too short to live in regrets, the “should-haves”, and “if-only’s”.
- To the child of God, He is not only the God of today and tomorrow; He is also the God of “should haves’ and “if only’s”.

Each of us have skeletons in our closet, mistakes in our past, “should-haves” and “if only’s” that have the ability to haunt us.

- one pastor, Speaking recently to another pastor, he remarked “I should have...”
- You see, even we, supposedly infallible preachers must face the reality of regret from time to time.

His response to this fellow minister, however, I believe was inspired by the Holy Ghost:

- he told him, “God doesn’t live in our ‘should-haves’...”

You see, friend, it has often been stated that “God will forgive you, but He won’t dig up the seeds you’ve sown.”

- And while I understand and agree with this statement, I don’t believe that God sits around stewing over the mistakes that we’ve made.
- And neither should we!

Paul wrote in *Phil 3:13 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.*

- Paul had all the qualities, all the pedigrees, the education, the upbringing, the book knowledge that a preacher could possibly want.
- Yet in spite of all his successes, he still had failures, and he realized that.

1 Tim 1:12-14 though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted [the Lord]; but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, (RSV)

Paul had found the secret to spiritual success, was to forget the “should-haves” and the “if only’s”.

- His focus was not on what he “should have” done, nor was it on “if only I had...”

No, my friend, Paul was “reaching forward” to the things in front of him.

- Nothing can get you quite out of sync with your spiritual focus quicker than dwelling on the “should haves” or the “if only’s”.

But hear me today when I remind you that Jesus Christ is not only the God of your Today and your Tomorrow.

- He’s also the God of every one of your “should haves” and “if only’s”!!!

Luke 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

The Lord obviously felt strongly about those who dwell in the land of “should haves” and “if only’s”!

I’m not sure about California, but in East Texas, there is a saying about someone we think is useless:

- “He ain’t fit for nothin’!”

If you study the Greek meaning of what Jesus was saying, the word fit here literally means “well-placed, adapted, ready for use”.

- It’s the same word found in *Luke 14:34-35 Salt is good: but if the salt has lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out.*
- In a nutshell, it’s worthless!

If Jesus felt this strongly about those who look back with remorse or regret at what they’re leaving behind, I believe He feels just as strongly about those who constantly live in their “should haves” and “if only’s”.

- Come on, we’ve all made foolish mistakes in our lifetime!
- We’ve all done things we either wish we hadn’t done, or wish we’d done differently.
- We’ve all thought “if only” from time to time.
- There’s nothing wrong with learning from your mistakes:

Indeed, someone once wisely stated, “Those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it.”

- The secret is to push on, to move forward, to leave the “should haves” and the “if only’s” behind you and keep pressing ahead.

Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

How many times have we quoted or merely thought about this simple scripture, yet we focus only on the “today and forever” part?

- But Jesus is not only the God of your today and all your tomorrows, my friend;
- If He's truly the same Jesus yesterday that He is today and tomorrow, then He's the god of all your "should haves" and "if only's"

Katherine Mansfield, a well-known author in New Zealand once wrote, "Regret is an appalling waste of energy; you can't build on it; it's only good for wallowing in."

- Someone needs to hear the word of the Lord this morning:
- You've wasted far too much time regretting the past, dwelling on the "should haves", thinking about the "if only's" in your life.
- It's time to allow Jesus Christ to become the same Yesterday, Today, And Forever.
- It's time to allow Him to be the God of "should haves" and "if only's".