How To Have A Life of NO REGRETS

(A New Year's Message)
(Selected Scriptures)
12/31/2023

Introduction: 2 Timothy 4:6-8 *v.7

- ***Don't procrastinate any longer. Fulfill what you know to be God's will this year!***

I. Whatever you need to BE, <u>BECOME it NOW</u>!

II. Whatever you need to DO, <u>ACCOMPLISH it NOW</u>!

III. Whatever you need to INVEST, <u>SPEND it NOW</u>!

IV. Whoever you need to REACH for Christ, <u>TELL them NOW</u>!

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The tragedy of a wasted life vs the blessedness of a faithful life.

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote the well-known lines, "For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: *It might have been!*" (MacArthur, Matthew p. 96)

Proverbs 3:27-28
Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do *it*. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

Pride & Procrastination are perhaps the two greatest deceivers

Ask God to reveal to you what your Priorities should be and then live for what really matters.
God/Family/Others

Hebrews 9:27
And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

There is NO Video Game or PC Game Restart or "Respawn" button to life; Once lived, no second chance; No reincarnation.

- ***Don't procrastinate any longer. Fulfill what you know to be God's will this year!***

I. Whatever you need to BE, <u>BECOME it NOW</u>!

Philippians 3:13-14
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, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul's purpose (motivation, goal) in life was <u>singular</u>. "This <u>one</u> thing I do" If you have more primary goals in life than one, you have too many. Having too many priority goals in life produces a lack of direction.

"Our ministry is <u>not</u> our goal, but a means to that goal."

"This <u>one</u> thing I do" -- Actually those people who are talented in many areas are the least useful to Christ! They face the danger of allowing these things to pull their life away from having the single goal of pursuing Christ!

Concentration is the secret of power. EX: "If a river is allowed to overflow its banks, the area around it becomes a useless swamp. But if that river is dammed up and controlled, it becomes a source of power." (Wiersbe, p. 97)

Such a pursuit:

1. Involves running without looking back.

"Forgetting: - does not mean to fail to remember (no person can forget the past--unless he acquires brain damage or senility). The word means to deliberately overlook or neglect.

You must determine that you will no longer be influenced or affected by the past. Some of you may be shackled by regrets of the past. You are trying to run the race looking backwards! No wonder you stumble and fall!

ILLUS: of driving a car with your head turned back is hazardous.

"Forgetting" means that we should not allow the past (status and achievements, and even failures) to influence our present attitude or conduct.

For Paul to remember his past in Judaism might encourage him to put confidence in the flesh.

Remembering his successes in his Christian career might lead to self-satisfaction. Remembering any failures (which he does not mention) would discourage him.

Past things are not motivations now!

NOTE: His motivation for service was <u>not</u> his salvation <u>experience</u>! And our motivation should not be any experience.

Such a pursuit:

2.Involves running with your eyes fixed on the goal.

"Reaching forth" - "The metaphor is from the foot race and the word pictures the body of the racer bent forward, his hand outstretched toward the goal, and his eye fastened upon it." (Vincent).

If you are saved, you are in the race.

Heb. 12:1-2a - "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witness, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doeth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

How are you running?
What are you running toward?

"Those things which are before" = everything tied in with the Resurrection!

"I press" - Greeks used the word to describe a hunter eagerly pursuing his prey

(Cp. Paul's running in the race in I Cor. 9:24-27)

A good runner only thinks of the goal and doesn't stop. Paul was challenged for the prize--He pursued it fanatically.

"The mark" - refers to the mark of a goal on which a runner would fix his eye as he has just turned the curve or gone around the post and is now in the home stretch where he can see the goal.

Paul is living with a mind-set awaiting the "come up hither" (Rev. 4:1) of the Lord. He was one who "loved Christ's appearing."

Romans 12:1-2
I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Surrender Now!

1) Be filled with God's Spirit (Eph.5:18)
2) Be abiding in Christ and in His Word (see: John 15:1-7)

II. Whatever you need to DO, <u>ACCOMPLISH it NOW</u>!

Ephesians 5:15-16
See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Col. 4:5 - "Walk in wisdom toward then that are without, redeeming the time."

1. Time is valuable (precious)

"Redeem" = buy out; used of a market place; making the most of (ILLUS: taking advantage of an unbelievable sale at the store)

Don't lose it--use it.
Don't waste it--invest it
Don't neglect it--make the most of it!

2. Time is irreplaceable.

"Time" - 3 Greek words:
1. - life span, long time, eternity
2. - a period of time
*** 3. - a point of time, a specific moment of time, an opportunity

(Cp. Gal. 6:10 - "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith.")

Can never go back (EX: once you hit your 20's, can never be a teenager again)

Time cannot be saved (it's either spent wisely or wasted)

Three things never return: 1) the spoken word; 2) the past life; 3) the neglected opportunity.

*Sinful human nature is to procrastinate (think in terms of future) EX: "When I grow up . . ." "Someday I will . . ." "I have plenty of time."

*We tend to think in terms of huge chunks of time. Be concerned about the moments of time you have now! "Seconds make up minutes; and minutes, hours; and hours, days . . ."

"Days are evil" (wicked)

NOTE: Paul could have said "short," but instead chose to say "evil."

Same word is used in Lord's prayer - "Deliver us from evil"

See Eph. 6:13 - "Evil day"

A few years later, the very city (Rome) where Paul penned these words was burned! Christians are blamed and made scapegoats by Nero. Blood ran deep (human torches). Not long after, Paul died a martyr's death there.

These are times of 1) struggle (Eph. 6:12 - "We wrestle not against flesh and blood . . ."); 2) Suffering (Phil. 1:29 - "For unto you it is given on behalf of Christ . . .")

We must seize opportunities!

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow . . ."

The clock of time is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop,
At late or early hour.
Now is the only time you own;
Live, love, toil with a will (doing God's will)
Place no faith in tomorrow,
For the clock may then be still.

Time is fleeting - Life = vapor, like grass that withers and flower that fades away.

Whatever you spend your time on, you are actually dying for (i.e. part of your life is given in exchange). If it isn't worth dying for, it isn't worth living for)

If we are God's servants and He is our Master, when we waste time, we are stealing and abusing our Master's (boss's) time.

You don't need more time; make better use of the time you have!

1) Make a time budget (schedule)
2) Make a priority list (what you are living for)

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow . . ."

The greatest investment is the investment in the greatest thing! There is nothing greater than God and His Work.

III. Whatever you need to INVEST, SPEND it NOW!

"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out…
Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, …
That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate (share)" –1 Timothy 6:7; 17-18

See: Matthew 25:14-30

Be faithful with what God has given to you until the Lord returns!

Be faithful because. . .

1. **The Lord has entrusted you with responsibility** (v. 14)

Be faithful because. . .

2. **The Lord has not entrusted you with more than you can handle** (v. 15)

Be faithful because. . .

3. **The Lord expects you to use the "talents" He has given to you** (v. 16-18)

Be faithful because. . .

4. **The Lord is coming back and will hold you accountable for what you have received** (v. 19)

Be faithful because. . .

5. **Faithfulness in little things** (in this life) **will be rewarded with greater privilege in the future** (v. 20-23)

Be faithful because. . .

6. **There are no adequate excuses you will be able to offer the Lord at Judgment Day** (v. 24-27)

Be faithful because. . .

7. **There are severe and serious consequences for unfaithfulness** (v. 28-30)

IV. Whoever you need to REACH for Christ, <u>TELL them NOW</u>!

1Co 9:16 - For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

When he realized he was merely the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15) saved by God's grace, apart from works, and called into a ministerial office he did not deserve, Paul was aware that he had nothing to brag or boast about.

For Paul, preaching the Gospel was a binding obligation, not an option. A sacred duty, not a sometimes desire. It was a must, not a maybe; a conviction, not a choice.

He was compelled like Jeremiah, who said: *"Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."* (Jer. 20:9)

Compelled like Elihu, who said: *"For I am full of matter; the spirit within me constraineth me. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer."* (Job 32:18-20)

Many times in our lives there is no "GO" because there is no "WOE." (We don't realize the seriousness of remaining silent.)

We are God's only plan

1. He is not using <u>angels</u> (Acts 10:1-8)

2. He is not using the <u>dead</u> (Lk. 16:19-31)

3. He is not using <u>creation</u> (Rom. 1:20)

"Brethren, see poor sinners round you slumbering on the brink of woe;
Death is coming, hell is moving, can you bear to let them go?
See our fathers and our mothers, and our children sinking down;
Brethren, pray and holy manna will be showered all around."

Brethren, We Have Met To Worship (Holy Manna)
Words: George Atkins, 1819.

Every person has a soul-spirit which is of...

More value than all the wealth of the world (Mt.16:26, Mk.8:36,37)

Every person will...

Live on for eternity

A. The souls of the saved are with the Lord (Gen.35:18; II Cor.5:8; Acts 7:59)

B. The souls of the lost are experiencing eternal anguish & suffering (Mt. 10:28; Rev. 14:11; 20:14,15)

If people only knew ***The Doom of the Lost***

1. Luke 16:19-31 -

--eternal conscious torment
--eternal unfulfilled desire (v. 24)
--eternal memory (v. 25)
--eternal hopelessness (v. 26)
--eternal loneliness (v. 19-21)

2. Matthew 8:12 - outer darkness

But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

3. Matthew 13:42 - furnace of fire

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

4. Matthew 25:41 - everlasting fire

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

5. Matthew 25:46 - everlasting punishment

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

6. Mark 3:29 - eternal damnation

But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

7. Rev. 11:7 - bottomless pit

8. Rev. 20:10 - lake of fire and brimstone

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are,* and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

9. Rev. 21:8 - second death

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

"You Lived Next Door to Me For Years"

You lived next door to me for years.
We shared our dreams, our joys, and tears.
A friend to me you were indeed,
A friend who helped me when in need.

My faith in you was strong and sure.
We had such trust as should endure.
No words between us ever rose,
Our friends were alike--and so, our foes.

What sadness, then, my friend, to find,
That, after all, you weren't so kind.
The day my life on earth did end,
I found you weren't a faithful friend.

For all those years we spent on earth,
You never talked of the second birth.
You never spoke of my lost soul,
And of the Christ who'd make me whole.

I'm lost today eternally,
And tell you now my earnest plea.
You cannot do a thing for me--
No words today my bonds will free.

But do not err, my friend, again.
Do all you can for souls of men.
Plead with them now quite earnestly--
Lest they be cast in Hell with me.

--Arthur unknown

Conclusion:

2 Cor. 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: <u>behold</u>, <u>now</u> <u>*is*</u> the accepted time; <u>behold</u>, <u>now</u> <u>*is*</u> the day of salvation.)

God is ready to save NOW!

A. God <u>HEARS</u> the sinner at a favorable season of time

In verse 2 Paul gives the Corinthians a very good reason why they should come to genuine faith.

V.2) **"For He saith"** – Paul quotes in the first half of this verse, Isaiah 49:8 -<u>"Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee:</u> and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages"

"in a time accepted" – in a favorable (dektos) season (kairos). At a welcome moment. In many people's lives, there are those open times when distractions are few, the felt need for salvation is great, and the invitation is available.

There are favorable seasons in which it is easy to come to God for His grace. That time is now.
God hears the call of the sinner at this time as He offers salvation.
When you die, it is too late!

B. God <u>HELPS</u> the sinner on the day of his salvation

"the day" – there is a particular day in which someone believes and comes from darkness to light, from lostness to being found, from blindness to sight, from distance from God to intimacy with Him, from being a child of the Devil to becoming a child of God.

God by His spirit actually helps the lost sinner to come to receive His grace.

How does He help?
By softening one's hardened heart
By opening one's blinded eyes
By convincing us of Christ and His alsufficiency

"Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation"

Paul now gives an application to his quote of Isaiah 49:4. Paul's emphasis is on the word "Now".

Salvation is the most urgent matter on earth! The word "behold" (Look) is also an attention getting word to express urgency.

The clock of time is wound but once,
And no man has the <u>power</u>
To tell just when the hands will stop,
At late or early hour.
Now is the only time you own;
Live, love, toil with a <u>will</u> (doing God's will)
Place no faith in tomorrow,
For the clock may then be <u>still</u>.