



Pack Up the Labels, Unpack the Truth, Week Four - Failure and Regret, Looking Forward Not Back

Like many friends, I graduated from high school and looked forward to heading to college. Fourteen days after I began my college career, it was over and done, and I came hobbling home. It took two cars to move all my belongings to college and only one car to bring them back. My father, who was so disappointed in me, gave me the silent treatment for two weeks. My college career was finished in record time, and I learned then and there to apply the label "failure," and I would soon add the labels "shame," "guilt," and "regret."

I am the dedicated owner of those sticky labels. I've done things I'm not proud of and wasted many opportunities available to me. The phrases "should have," "could have," and "if only" are on the table of contents page of my life story. Even when I try to rip that page out, I am "back to the future," teleported to a place and time I'd rather not be.

I'd like to forget my poor choices and the experiences that leave me feeling like a failure, but life, others, and even myself refuse to let me. They dare me to remove those sticky tags, all too eager to remind me of my past. I'm convinced those labels will stick with me forever because, in my eyes, I am a failure, full of guilt, shame, and regret.

If you are like me, you probably have some regrets from your past. You, too, may wear the guilty label along with shame because of the things you've done that you are not too proud of. The failure label applies suitably, too, because of poor choices and their consequences. Wouldn't it be nice if there were an eraser to make the past disappear or, at the very least, the memory of it? Is there some kind of solvent that will remove those sticky labels? The good news is there is!

It would be suitable for those of us with failure, guilt, shame, and regret to remember God's promises.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" 2 Corinthians 5:17

God promises His children, those "in Christ," that they don't have to dwell in their past failures and mistakes! They are a new creation, and the old is gone. That means we don't have to dwell on the old poor decisions and choices. God gives us a fresh start.

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." Ephesians 1:7

When we trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior and give our lives to Him, our sins are forgiven, so those old mistakes and poor choices don't have any hold over us anymore. Christ died for



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us so that our past doesn't rule over our present or future. God's grace rules over the mistakes we've made and the sins we committed. We can turn our eyes forward rather than back.

***"as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12***

"For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." Hebrews 8:12

God is not forgetful but *chooses not* to hold our sins against us. If God can forgive us, remove our sins from us, and not hold them against us, why do we continue to rehash our past and apply those labels? Undoubtedly, we may suffer the consequences of our poor choices and mistakes. Even so, God reassures us that we can "forget the past" because "he is doing a new thing."

***"Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.
See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:18-19***

Because of God's promises, we can remove old labels and apply new ones that say forgiven, redeemed, new creation, and grace receiver! So, wear them well and march forward on the new path God has for you!

Heart Moment: Are the phrases "should have," "could have," and "if only" part of your story? What regrets do you carry with you each day? Make a list and then mark over your list with the words FORGIVEN and NEW. Write out Isaiah 43:18-19 below your list and a prayer of thanks to God for forgiving you and giving you a fresh start in His Son, Jesus.


Prayer: Heavenly Father, you are the giver of fresh starts and second chances. Thank you for promising that I am a new creation in Christ, and the old is gone. Forgive me when I choose to believe the worldly labels instead of the truth of your promises. Help me to believe and keep my eyes on You and the hope You give me for my future.

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