

Philippians 3.12-14
Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda
WRCOB 1.6.19

(Watch video clip before reading the sermon)

<http://aplus.com/a/clean-slate-blackboard-experiment>

Chances not taken

Words not spoken

Dreams not pursued.

Is that you?

Mark Twain said, *Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do.*

Christians have done a pretty good job

Knowing how to handle the regret of past sin.

Those things we did that were wrong.

But what we haven't done so well

Is learning to deal with the regret of things not done.

Yes, the Christian faith has taught us the steps

In working out our regret for sinful actions

Confess, repent, and do better.

But have we learned how to deal

With the regrets of actions NOT taken?

The regret for things not done

Can harbor a dysfunction within us

That can be quite debilitating.

Regret for the things we did can be tempered by time; it is regret for the things we did not do that is inconsolable.

Have you experienced the woulda, coulda shouldas?

The things we wish we would have said
 Could have done
 Should have experienced?

I think we all have on various levels.

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Bonnie Ware has spent years
 Working as a nurse with patients in hospice care.

As she walks alongside her patients
 Through their final life stages
 She's been taken aback by regret-filled lives.

She has compiled them into 5 common themes.

1. **I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.** So many of her patients felt boxed in by others' expectations, whether it's parents, spouses, or children.
2. **I wish I hadn't worked so hard.** Ware observed, "This [regret] came from every male patient that I nursed."
3. **I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.** "Many people suppressed their feelings in order to keep peace with others Many [patients] developed illnesses related to the bitterness and resentment they carried as a result."
4. **I wish I'd stayed in touch with my friends.** "There are many deep regrets about not giving friendships the time and effort that they deserved. Everyone misses their friends when they are dying."
5. **I wish I'd let myself be happier.** "Many did not realize until the end that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits."

The words, “If only” can haunt us for a lifetime.

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This is my first sermon to you in the year 2019.

I started a tradition several years ago
To preach Philippians 3:12-14
As a New Year’s sermon.

I got the idea from Rev. Oscar Miller
Long-time pastor of the Moscow congregation
Shenandoah District.

The text is a good one for the New Year.

It teaches us how to move forward from past regrets
Realizing that every day, every year
Comes with a clean slate.

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The Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the church in Philippi.

Though he faced the certainty of death,
He remained forward-looking through Christ.

He gives us three points for living free of regrets:

1. Forget what is behind
2. Strain toward what is ahead
3. Press on towards the ultimate goal.

Paul, fully aware of all that has happened in his own life
His own mistakes, his own weaknesses
His own regrets

Encourages us to move on . . .

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But Lord knows, it’s difficult to move on
Trying to shake off the regrets from our past.

Lord knows, it's tough to experience
A new chapter in our life
When we're consumed rereading the old ones!

We need to learn how to move forward.

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F. B. Meyer puts it this way:

It is a mistake to be always turning back to recover the past. The law for Christian living is not backward, but forward, not for experiences that lie behind but for doing the will of God which is always ahead and beckoning us to follow.

Leave the things that are behind and reach forward to those that are before. For on each new height to which we attain there are appropriate joys that befit the new experience.

Don't fret because life's joys are fled. There are more in front. Look up, press forward, the best is yet to be.

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In other words, don't let the woulda, coulda, shouldas
Take over your life.

Take control, forget the past, move forward
Press on toward the ultimate goal.

And what is the ultimate goal?

Paul says it in the previous paragraph, **3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.**

And again in **4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

Let the power found in the Spirit of Jesus Christ
Be the power that guides and directs your life in 2019.

It's a clean slate!

Don't fill it with regrets.

Make peace with what you left behind in 2018.

Move on, pressing on toward the goal
Of becoming the person
God designed and created you to be.

Welcome the New Year
As a chapter yet to be written.

Do the things you'll regret NOT doing!

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Let Christ give you the courage
To live a life true to yourself!

Here's your chance . . .

A New Year
A clean slate
Endless possibility

Do yourself a favor
Live the life God designed for you.

Be empowered through Christ.

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

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A good way to leave the past behind
And to move forward with a clean slate
Is through the anointing service.

In the moments following
I invite you to consider letting me anoint you.

The anointing service can empower you.

It can be that signature moment
When you let go of past regrets

And begin to live your life
In the way Christ meant for you to live
By allowing God's will to be your guiding light.

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As we stand and sing our final hymn of invitation

If the Spirit leads you
Come forward and I will anoint you.

I will anoint you in the name of our Trinitarian God
For the forgiveness of sin
For the strengthening of your faith
For healing and wholeness.

Softly and tenderly, Jesus is calling
Calling for you and for me.