

Regrets...I've Had a Few...

A Message by James R. Newby

Text: Romans 6:3-4

“Regrets, I’ve had a few...but then again, too few to mention....” So sings Old Blue Eyes, Frank Sinatra, in his famous hit, **MY WAY**. Well, Frank may have had too few to mention, but as for me, I am going to mention some...I find it a helpful spiritual exercise to take an inventory of one’s life. What do I regret? What are those things that I should have done, and what are those things I should not have done?

I regret wounding the hearts of others... Did you ever tease someone until it wounded his or her heart? Did you ever think that someone was so brainless or did something so stupid that you derided that person to the point of shame? I am sorry to say that I have—when I was younger, but there is no excuse.

I regret not hugging my Dad more... I remember getting enough courage to do it a couple of times in our brief sojourn together. It was not as embarrassing as we both thought it would be.

I regret not telling my Mother that I loved her more... She knew it, but I know that it would have made her feel ever so much better had I said it more.

I regret not asking more questions of my mentor and all of the other brilliant minds with whom I have had the privilege to be in contact over the years. Lost opportunities rarely come back around for a second chance.

I regret not learning a second language...I have a brilliant wife who is bilingual, and she has tried to teach me Spanish. When she gets frustrated with me, I have learned many of the bad words! I wish that I had learned Spanish when I was younger.

I regret not keeping up with my friends in high school and college...I thought myself too busy to take the time to attend the reunions, and I didn't think that they would want to be bothered by any ghosts from their past...I was wrong on both counts. Everyone enjoys hearing from a voice from the past, if only for a few minutes. I am grateful that I attended my 50th high school reunion last summer.

I regret not cherishing my mementos more...I didn't know how important they were to the documentation of my life. Each paper, card, certificate or medal becomes a launching point for the re-emergence of vivid memories that have been obscured by the passing years.

I regret not being more organized with my life...A quick look at my desk will tell you that I have many projects "in process," and I fear throwing anything away.

I regret being too satisfied with my dreams, and too many times failing to make good on my visions... I need to stop saying “If only...” so much, and, instead, concentrate on the “I haves.”

I regret not asking my parents and grandparents more questions about their lives and our history as a family. The older I get, the more I am interested in my genealogy and understanding from where I have come. One of my recent discoveries has been to learn that I am a direct descendant of John Alden and Priscilla Mullins of Mayflower fame. I would have liked asking my grandmother more questions about the Prouty family side of my heritage.

I regret not being more available to my daughter as she was growing up... The questions surface periodically—“Was I a good father to Alicia?” “What could I have done better?” “Did I really need to spend so much time traveling during her years at home?” “Will all of *my weaknesses* eventually be played out in her life?” Last week she called me on her way home from work, and we laughed together continuously for a solid hour...

The reading from Scripture which I just read, is Paul’s attempt to help the young Roman Church understand that in Christ we can walk in newness of life. The old self is dead, and a new self is born. Paul uses the imagery of baptism to make his point. It is a conversion passage...a passage of hope. You see, in all of the ups

and downs through which we pass as human beings, and with the trail of regrets that we all make, *there is the surprising grace of God*. In the great things of life, such as our overall relationships with one another, and in what may seem the little things of life—missing a soccer game where your child played, we can come to know that even in such regrets and feelings of emptiness, *we are loved and accepted*. With the reassurance from my faith, I can move beyond my regrets. It does not mean that I will quit having regrets, but it will mean that the regrets will not have the *last* word in my life. This is the good news of the Gospel. *We worship a God of new beginnings, and of these new beginnings, there is no end.*