

Don't Look Back

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[0 : 00] But I hope you have your Bible to look at four passages initially. The first passage we read in Luke chapter 17 and then in Philippians chapter 3.

Because in one chapter the Gospel writer reminds us that it is wise for us not to look back as God's wife did.

And the Apostle reminds us in the end of the passage that it is wise for us to look forward and to focus on the Lord Jesus.

So it says if there is a topic we are looking at, don't look back, just look forward. And maybe some of you here tonight will look back to the days and maybe years of your youth when energy was boundless and limitless.

And you will never ever go to age like the old folk that you used to visit or that used to visit your home or something beside you in church and you will suddenly sort of begin to nod off to sleep.

[1 : 16] It was never going to happen to you. But these days have come. And apparently as you become old you will lose your muscle tone, you will lose your strength.

You are not able to do the things you are used to when you are young. Your bones become more fragile. And it is easy for you to break a bone or fracture a bone should you fall or slip or slip or even in the home.

Your long capacity is certainly not what it used to be and you envy maybe the younger singers in our midst. And as far as your vision is concerned, while it's deeply needed, I demand a well, while I function perfectly as a minister without my respect.

I am discovering now that my notes are rather larger and the print has to be increased from 12 to 14 or 16 when I come to print any message that I want to deliver.

And what about my hearing? My wife says, well, you are not listening to me. I say, well, I am, I just didn't hear you. So, who doesn't remember days when energy was boundless, vision was perfect, you could hear the grass grow.

[2 : 35] And, well, we just had no sympathy for people of more matured years. Well, before you throw in the towel, and before you look back to such cases as well, they're past.

And I can say for a certain that they're not coming back if you've reached a certain stage in your life. But there is a wonderful promise in Scripture, and it's found at the end of chapter 14 in Isaiah, where it says that youths, young men, will faint and become weary, and young men shall fall exhausted.

But those who weep from the Lord shall be near their strength. They shall march up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.

What does that mean? Well, it means this. The basic level is this. That the Lord asks for a few. Then His grace is more than sufficient for you.

Whatever you're staged in life, God's grace is sufficient. For you. But He will give grace and strength to those who are weak and weary and frail and fragile.

[3 : 49] So don't look back to the days of your youth. Also, don't look back to your failures. Because sometimes we dwell on regrets, on hurts, and maybe even missed opportunities, and mistakes.

And we feel ashamed, as we recall of the past. And dwelling on such matters will only drive us down to darkness and to despair.

Maybe that you're here tonight and you say, well, if only I took that step of commitment added to me in 40 years ago. I still remember the minister preaching, I said, well, it touched my heart and I knew that I should have been in prayer making the following week.

But so many things happened. But we had just been out playing. And somehow, without the opportunity, disintegrated, dissolved into the air, and vanished, and disappeared.

And maybe it's something that happened in your life. And you're so ashamed of it. I wish I had done this or that or the next, or said this or the next.

[4 : 56] But I lost my very best friend. How can I possibly become a believer, a follower of the Lord, given all that I have done? Well, if we're here this evening, be reminded of this.

That the Bible says of the confessor of sin. That he is able to forgive our sin. And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And if we say that, well, I have no sin. We deceive ourselves, and we know that the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sin in the name of Jesus, then he is able to cover us and clothe us in his own wonderful righteousness.

And only Jesus has the power to do that. We'll look back to the way things used to be in the church.

And maybe in scalping, I'm pretty much going to have a session won't be too angry if I say this.

[6 : 05] But things haven't changed all that much. It was wonderful to be given a lot of service for the communion. And I was hoping to pray, and the post-communion, and pre-communion address, and post-communion address, and so on and so forth.

And the fencing of the tables, and that has appeared in so many, many homes. But I did notice there were very, very, very, very few people sitting behind the table.

Whereas I think in the past, in the years of old, lots of people used to sit, the eyes of a mom, growing up with a partial barbers, remember the interiors who would sit.

Some of them, not caring what was being said, but they sat and kept a wee eye of the members, and heard the adapter to the message that was delivered.

Things have changed. Things are changing. And things will never be as they used to be. After all, anyone here who wears a suit that you wore, or your grandfather wore some 70-year-old or more?

[7 : 17] You don't expect to sit in many hard pews. You'll like comfortable seats. And when folks stay at your house of communion, they don't buy a mattress of pain.

You'll give them the very best room. Things do change. Some things for the better. Some things maybe not for the better. But if looking back encourages you to move forward, as you remember the blessings, the fellowship, the presses of the Lord, that was almost tangible.

You could say, oh, I wish I could put it into a box, or into a container, and take it home with me. Such was the presence of the Lord, and the grace of the Lord, and the power of the Lord.

And such and such was preaching. Of that person, like the praise. Oh, we remember these days when we are sad because they're all right with us.

There was a minister who was recently adopted in the Presby of Ross, where I am. And he asked a friend, please, to come and speak.

[8 : 23] And when they had a chat in the months, where they were, and this was in a neighborhood, in a Presby down south. Somebody in Pfeiffer, still, as well as I recall.

They were having a little heart-to-heart chat. And one minister said to the other minister, oh, I really feel so far away from the Lord.

The other minister looked at him and he said, well, you know, the Lord hasn't moved. The Lord hasn't moved. We can't move back, and sometimes we're saddened, as we look back, because things are not the way they used to be.

But God has moved. God is still the Savior. And God, through Jesus, has promised to build his church. And the very gates of heaven will not prevail against him.

And if looking back spurs us to move forward, or encourages us, rather, to move forward, then, then it's a good thing to remember such things.

[9 : 31] But very often, very often, we live in the past. So don't look back, if it fills you with a deep sense of a kind of depression.

But don't look back to the things that you know to be sinful. Pleasures that have turned out to be deadly. They are here to be included on the sickness.

If you discovered maybe too late, that death and destruction was there in the sun. Jesus speaks about the broad road, doesn't he? And he speaks about the wild gate that leads to destruction, or the way that leads to destruction.

But he also talks about the gate that is now, and the way that is hard, and those who find it after you. We read a very short passage in Luke chapter 17.

A lady who looked back, her name was, well, what was her name? She was known as Lord's wife. That's the distinction that Christmas given her.

[10 : 40] And when people of faith look to the Bible and hear the name of Lord's wife, what do they think of? They think of somebody who, tragically, looked back.

God sent a message to the family, and saw the Lord on. He said, this is about to happen. Flee for your lives.

Don't stay in the midst of the plane. Go. Some family members accompanied Lord's wife. Some did not. But Lord's wife somehow had a delay.

And she turned by. And she was turned into a pillar of salt. As a fire in the brimstone. Fire down upon her.

Or fell upon her. And encased her. And made her into, probably a statue. Fossilised forever. And one of the many times Lord and his wife conducted worship in the family home.

[11 : 45] One of the many times Lord would have shared with his wife the things that God did to him. Even although he was unworthy. The many times that he spoke of Abraham.

Abraham, a man of faith. He chose not the easy path. But the road that leads to faith. The road that leads to God.

I wonder how many times God would have prayed for his wife. Saying, thank you God for my wife. Thank you for the way in which she looks after the home.

Thank you for the way in which she cares for the children. Thank you for the way in which she's, well, hospitable to friends and neighbours. Though we haven't many in this city yet.

She seems to be able to mix and mingle with them. Thank you for that way. And she left with love.

[12 : 42] Fleeing from the cities that God said would be judged. And they were judged. But she looked fine. I wonder why she looked fine.

What made her look fine? What made her stop? Maybe she thought that, well, what are these people that I'm leaving behind? I care for them. I love them.

The divided people of faith. And they had no concern with the God that God worshipped. Maybe she was frightened.

frightened for some reason. And she was paralyzed. And she looked back. But maybe she was thinking of all the things and maybe all the pleasures that she left behind in Sodom and in Gomorrah.

And she went back in her heart towards them. You see, physically, she was a misgender from the condemned cities.

[13 : 45] But deep in her heart, she was feeling Sodom and Gomorrah. And is it not true that a person may live in a home? It is a Christian home.

A home where worship is conducted on a regular basis. And where God's people are quite welcome. And where grace is said in four weeks.

And maybe prayers are offered before that person goes to bed at the end of the evening. But it still may be possible for a person in that home to be in a far country.

In a distant valley. Without Christ in that heart. Without Christ. As their Savior. I almost remember that Albert who was in Bedrock.

His name was Bjorn Tamatol. Some of whom he was unknown. And he was converted in the late 40s, early 50s. But he went through the second war.

[14 : 55] He was injured. And he ended up in a hospital in Egypt. And he used to read his Bible. But he only read his Bible when it was reasonably dark outside.

And he had a private life. Or he was able to shut the door so that nobody would see him read his Bible. And he was certain that somehow the prayers of his mother surrounded him and kept him safe.

And he said, but I always said my prayers. First thing in the morning and last thing at night. He survived the Lord.

And he was working very, very hard. And I suppose he had a good business. But then when the gospel was preached by a sacrilege. By a two-year evangelist.

Our preacher came. He felt convicted. He knew that he was a sinner. He knew that should he die that very evening.

[15 : 57] He would go to a hospital. And he always used to say. And while the church came in the way of Christian. The first thing that God took me. Were my prayers.

Because I rested in my prayers. They were my hope for salvation. The things that I was able to offer God. You see, he didn't rest in the Lord Jesus.

He wasn't sure if he knew who the Lord Jesus was. And he couldn't figure out why Jesus had to suffer and die. But he rested in his prayers. And when he was under conviction of the Holy Spirit.

God removed that from him. And he was a sinner condemned. In the presence of God. Only then did he begin to pray.

And call out to God. For help. And you're looking back. Back to something at Christ.

[17 : 00] Maybe you're feared. Maybe you're ashamed. Maybe like one's wife. Creating the things that you know deep down. Can never really satisfy.

Or are you moving forward. While you're entering the week. From Philippians. Thank you. I felt that was a very positive.

Chapter. A positive passage. That. Will help us. And aid us. If we seek to give our lives to Jesus. And move forward. With the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because Paul gives us. This recipe. For. I suppose. Victorious. Christian. Living. Not that I am already a team.

Or that I am already perfect. But I press on. He says. To make it my own. Because Christ Jesus. Has made me. His own. And he said.

[17 : 57] I press. On. Towards the goal. For the tribes of death. Would call it God. In Christ Jesus. In the Gavsley. Verses 12. To 14.

Now. What was it. That fueled. His. Vision. What was it. That enabled him. To move forward. With such. Confidence. Well.

I was reading a wee book. A devotional. Commentary. I suppose. I think that. I can't remember. Where I bought it. That was printed. By. Ambassador. Which I'm not sure. If it's still printed.

They were. A company. From Northern Ireland. That printed. Books. Or published books. And this wee book. Was by. The Sam Gordon. And the title was.

Joy. And I'm afraid. I apologize. One or two of his thoughts. Distilling them. In the process. From that wonderful. New book. Joy. The apostle Paul.

[18 : 56] Always focus. On Jesus. Always. Jesus. Always Jesus. From beginning. To ending. But the apostle Paul.

Here says. That Jesus. Is a person. Worth. Knowing. If you look at. Verse 7. But whatever gain I had.

I counted as loss. For the sake of Christ. Indeed I counted everything as loss. Because of the surpassing. Worth of knowing. Christ Jesus.

My Lord. For whom I have suffered. The Lord of all things. And counted as rubbish. In order. That I may gain. The Lord Jesus Christ.

He says. That he is a person. Worth. Knowing. Jesus. Is the only person. Who ever loved. Lord.

[19 : 54] With all his heart. With all his mind. With all his fear. He is the only person. Who ever lived. Who also loved. His neighbor. As he loved. Him.

Sown. And surely. That is a person. Worth. Knowing. The Lord. Jesus. Christ. Paul said.

I gladly. Forfeit. All that I gain. In order. To know. The Lord Jesus Christ. And he was a man.

Who. Had been. Well. Made success. In the Jewish religion. In the Jewish faith. And he could say. Well. If a person. Was.

Is proud. Of their. Isis. Speak. Well. I am more proud. If a person. Is proud. Of. All that he has achieved. Within the Jewish faith.

[20 : 49] I have achieved. Far. Far. More. If people. Think they have earned. And have many. Peace. Well. I have far more.

Than they have. And all these things. He says. I count lost. For the knowledge. Of. The Lord Jesus Christ. He is a person.

Worth knowing. As. A. Person. A person. Whose word. Had it be broken. Whose presence. Is ever gracious.

Who is the one. Who receives. Our prayer. And I. Always think of. Illustration. I'm not sure. What's an illustration. Or. If it's something. That happened. Probably. It did happen. But started.

In a different generation. Of a builder. Who. Was maybe illiterate. Maybe he was. A few. Very short. Of his shivers. You see. I don't know. But there was.

[21 : 46] An accident. In his workplace. And he was. Carded off. The hospital. And before that. Happened. He was in the habit. Of. Going. To. A local church.

That. Had. An open door. Policy. And he would go. Into the church. I think. It must have been. An Episcopal church. That was out. Because. The communion table. For us. He called it.

The altar. Was in it. And a few. O'clock. Say. And every day. He would go down. To the. Moulton village. He would take. His. Carp. Off. And maybe.

A little. That. And his hand. And. Well. He said. I'm standing. In front of. The table. I'm saying. Jesus. It's. June. I've gone.

For a long time. Until the. Accident. And he. And. He. And. He. And. He. And. He. And. He. And. Staff. Ash. Came. To him. After. And. He. Said.

[22 : 37] Jim. Since you've been in the hospital. The rest of the patients are. Somehow. Other. Different. They're no longer complaining. They're no longer hungry at the staff.

We no longer hear the carcassion swear. What do you think made a difference? And. Jim. Wasn't sure. But he said.

You know. At three or four. Every afternoon. A man comes in. With a white coat. He comes along to the end.

By bed. And he says. Jim. It's Jesus. Jesus. Transforms lives.

Jesus. Jesus. Transforms. Hospital wars. Communities. Families. Nations. Always a person. Worth.

[23 : 33] Knowing. Do you know? Can I ask you this evening? And you've heard me in that direction. So that on the day of judgment.

Jesus will look at you and say. Well done. Good and faithful servant. Ended into the joy of the Lord. But Jesus is also a person.

Who is worthy of our trust. That's what the apostle said to me. Isn't he? Look at verse 9. I was talking earlier about my mission.

Well. It's coming and going these days. But he says. I'm the founding thing. Not having a righteousness of my own. That comes from the law. But that which comes through faith.

In Christ. A righteousness. From God. That depends on faith. For the just shall live by faith. He is a person worthy of our trust.

[24 : 31] Says the apostle Paul. Now this act of faith. This act of trust. Bestows. On the soul. A righteousness.

That we cannot earn. Through our own. Luther. Through our own. Wife. If I can give you another illustration. Not sure.

I think I read it. Probably. In a devotional. Some time ago. Well. A few years ago. And. Focused on a missionary.

Working in a foreign land. And he felt that his main task was. To translate the New Testament. Into the language of the indigenous people. Among whom. Why?

He loved the people. He was willing to endure. All sorts of cultures. So that Jesus. Would be made known to the people. But he.

[25 : 29] Came across. A whole obstacle. Something that he just never messaged. Would happen. He said. They don't have a word for. Faith.

Or trust. In this community. How can I communicate the gospel. To these people. If I try to explain. The word. Faith. In Jesus.

Or trust. In Jesus. Well. One day. A missionary. Was working hard. On his translation. Of the New Testament. And he noticed. That somebody. A stranger.

Came into the village. Very tired. Puffing and pumping. Breathing at me. Looking near him. He went to the chief of the village. Passed on a message. And then.

He threw himself. On the first. Hammer. Or bench. Or whatever was available. And uttered. A few words. But in a missionary. Something. Could not really get their days off.

[26 : 25] And the missionary. Answered. The man. Who walked in. In his work. Of translation. Tell me. Tell me. What did this man say? When he delivered the message. To the chief. And then. He threw himself.

On a hammer. And just. Almost fell asleep. Against him. Well. Literally. He said. He spoke. To the hammer.

And he said. To the hammer. Oh. I have come. To an end. Of myself. And now. I rest. In you. I wish him. What a wonderful way.

To explain. In Austin. That's what it means. To trust in Jesus. We come. To an end. Of our own. Self-righteousness. We come. To an end.

Of our doing. And. Just try to. Peace God. Of peace God. And now. We rest. In Jesus. I was telling.

[27 : 22] The minister. Just. Of a second. In the literature. In my own congregation. Who's not a believer. And who. Doesn't count. The church. Very often. Very very seldom.

And she phoned me. One day. And she said. You're not a very encouraging minister. Are you? And she said. I'm a good person. I'm really a good person.

And then I thought to myself. You're such a good person. Why do you feel so bad about yourself? I didn't quite say that to her. In so many words. But you see.

She hadn't come. To an end. Of her son. She hadn't placed her trust. In Jesus. And somehow or other. She was offering to Jesus. This sacrifice. That is me.

The good person. And she felt awful. She had no peace. No joy. No faith. No liberty. Couldn't enter. The spirit of worship.

[28 : 17] Or prayer. Or praise. Because sin. That blinded her. Oh Jesus. Is a person.

Worthy of trust. Trust. Cast yourself. Upon this. Marcia and grace. Don't be like a person.

I know this is an illustration. He was walking along. The cliff side. Fell. The very self-creen. Drew it out.

From the side of the cliff. And he cried. Hold to it. And he cried. God. God. Help me.

No one came. God. Help me. Save me. And I will be a faithful servant of you. And then he heard a voice.

[29 : 16] Like poor the branch. And I'll catch you. He's talking from home. And he said. Is anyone else early on.

You see. We're not happy with the message. God gives to us. We want an alternative message. That will make us somehow. Feel. Good.

About ourselves. Feel better. Oh Jesus. Is a person who loves us. With a love that is stronger than death. Jesus is that person who is working with our faith and our confidence.

Oh, Paul said, that I might have a righteousness from God that depends on faith and faith alone.

Also, Jesus is that person of limitless power. It is resurrection power, verse 10, that I might know him and the power of his resurrection and that I might share in that power, in his substance, becoming light of his death, that by any means I may obtain the resurrection of the dead.

[30 : 36] Now, Paul said in another location, I die daily. Dying to self, dying to sin, dying to awake in us, dying to divine, or in religion, and being alive in Jesus.

But here he's talking about resurrection power. And I couldn't help but think of that Old Testament verse that we find in Joel chapter 19.

A man who has suffered so, so much, and lost so, so much. Yet in chapter 19, verse 25, he says, What a wonderful word.

Profession of faith. Profession of faith. Profession of faith. Profession of faith. Profession of faith. That's resurrection faith. And that's part and parcel of the plastic in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Maybe if I hear me sometimes saying it's a recourse. Sometimes, or mostly some of the children, carry their eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face.

[32 : 03] And the things of faith. And the things of this earth will grow strangely in the light of his glory and grace. He is a person worth knowing.

He is a person worthy of our trust. He is a person whose power is to live in Christ.

Charles Lindon writes about Paul and he says, He, Paul, wanted to spend the balance of his ears on earth, knowing Christ more infinitely.

Drawing upon his resurrection power more increasingly. Entering into his sufferings more personally. And being conformed to his image more completely.

You see, that's the end of the self of looking to Jesus. Trusting in Jesus. Abiding in Jesus. And longing to be more like Jesus.

[33 : 17] Tell me which direction are you better in this evening. Are you forever looking back? Back, back, back.

Maybe like Mark's wife. But I will be looking forward. As did the apostle call to Jesus. To having more time with Jesus.

Enjoying more fellowship with Jesus. Being conformed to the image of Jesus. In a world that needs more people who are like Jesus.

And gracious, and God, the Holy Spirit, graciously assists us in that journey. When Jesus left the disciples, he said, I will send you an opportunity of counsellor.

One who will continue to want that I have started. And he gives a wonderful picture. And the word in the original is something like parakeet.

[34 : 29] One who will walk by outside. Who is parallel with us constantly and continually. And that's what Jesus is able to do.

Through the presence of power of the Holy Spirit. Our son who is special needs. When he was much younger, loved to run down into the sea. When it was in bed, I would have been blue.

The sea was so very light and the sound was so smooth. And he just loved to run into the sea. When we were up on the sand dunes, it was fine.

When we were up on the dry sand, it was fine. I always ran beside him. I wouldn't always hold his hand. Because I was there.

But I am. But the moment he ran down towards the sea, where there was nature. I always held his hand. His hand wasn't my hand.

[35 : 29] Because I was his father. And I am still his father. But you know we have a greater father than any earthly father.

We have the father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is he your father tonight? Does he hold you by the hand? Through the gracious power of the Holy Spirit.

The one who is parallel with us. Walking with us. Running with us. Lifting us up and following. Oh, Jesus is well worth the Lord.

And following. And confessing. And worshiping. And may you know. And may you even have a blessing to you. And to the family. And to this. Amen. Let's just finish a short prayer. Just a short prayer. Oh, Father.

Thank you. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[36 : 28] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. take it out of their hearts. Amen.

that Lord grant us grace that we might swear no hearts or door widely open and let and enter while we may.

For Jesus' name, Amen.