

How Can I Live with Yesterday?

We have all made mistakes in life. However, some mistakes we make are larger than others are. Some mistakes have greater consequences. While some mistakes and blunders only affect us, others have an impact on others – family, friends, church and such like. When they are spiritual blunders – sin – they have an impact also upon our God. For many of us, while we understand that God forgives us of the sin itself, we cannot let go of the guilt – it is an unbearable burden. We may even ask the question, “How can I live with yesterday?”

Several people preserved in divine scripture actually can understand how we feel and can help us. One of these is the apostle Paul. As a young man named Saul, Luke introduces us to him at the grisly stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58). While not actively participating in the murder, he “was consenting unto his death” (Acts 8:1), or in other words, he approved of the deadly deed of his Jewish brethren. Then, Luke records him making “havoc of the church, entering into every house and haling men and women...to prison” (Acts 8:3). He even “beat in every synagogue them that believe on” Jesus (Acts 22:19) and “compelled them to blaspheme” (Acts 26:11). Nevertheless, his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus literally changed his life (Acts 9). He would look back upon his past with grief, referring to himself as the chief of sinners

(cf. 1 Tim. 1:15). Thus, here was an individual who could certainly have opportunity to struggle with his past. How did he cope with his guilt of yesterday?

First, the apostle Paul believed in the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:3-10). While he recognized that the eternal plan of God for Jesus to resurrect from the dead for our sins was a manifestation of His grace, he applied that to himself when he referred to himself by stating,

For I am the last of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace, which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet, not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

He was able to live with yesterday because he believed in the grace of God. When we have difficulty living with our past, we need to believe in the grace of God for our lives. His outpouring of grace upon us was also not in vain – God has a purpose for our lives, and we can express appreciation for this grace by laboring more fervently in the kingdom!

Second, the apostle Paul believed in the compassion of Christ (1 Tim. 1:12-16). Upon writing to his protege Timothy, he referred to

Christ Jesus who

...counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious...howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

In other words, the apostle Paul believed on the mercy of Christ in his life. When we have difficulty in living with our yesterday, we need to believe on the compassion of Christ in that He showed us mercy, for which we can appreciate and express by living for Him everyday as a testimony to others.

Third, the apostle Paul believed in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 7:10-8:39). While he spent Romans 7 detailing the struggles of his own earlier life, he led that into Romans 8 and the power of the Holy Spirit in his life. When it seems as if we cannot cope with yesterday, we need to believe in the power of the Holy Spirit in our life.

Therefore, how can we live with yesterday? We learn from the apostle Paul – believe in the grace of God, the compassion and mercy of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit!