

Successful Christianity Now

- I. This study sets forth the importance of not letting the past impede victory and progress in the present.
- A. We do not live in the past and cannot change the past.
 - B. Decision-making is for the present and has implications for the future, not the past.
 - C. We do well to live in the present under the present law of Christ in this present evil world. **GAL 1:4.**
 - 1. The past law of Moses served its purpose but could perfect nothing. **HEB 7:19; 9:9.**
 - 2. The entire law of the sinless future world is not the rule for us now. **LUK 20:34-36.**
 - a. They of that world will not have to war against sin but we must be constantly at war with it now. **REV 21:27; 1PE 5:8-9.**
 - b. They of that world will never witness a brother being cast out but we must expect it now. **JOH 6:37 ct/w MAT 18:7; 2TI 3:1-5.**
 - D. The past is valuable for such things as:
 - 1. example and admonition. **1CO 10:6-11.**
 - 2. learning and hope. **ROM 15:4.**
 - 3. humility. **1TI 1:12-14.**
 - E. But the past can otherwise be contrary to our success as believers.
 - 1. We are to lay aside *every weight* that hinders our race. **HEB 12:1.**
 - 2. The past can be such a weight if it is not processed by faith.
 - F. The gospel is for the casting down of imaginations. **2CO 10:5.**
 - 1. imagination: The action of imagining, or forming a mental concept of what is not actually present to the senses (cf. sense 3); the result of this process, a mental image or idea (often with implication that the conception does not correspond to the reality of things, hence freq. *vain (false, etc.) imagination*).
 - 2. It is our challenge to distinguish between the realities and our perceptions in the past, to distinguish between past right and wrong, to not pretend that the real past never happened, and to process the past through the grid of faith in the present.
 - a. Paul had a warped perception of God, Christ and righteousness in his pre-conversion past. **ACT 26:9.**
 - b. Paul also had zeal and a good conscience in his pre-conversion past (**ACT 22:3; 23:1**) which he continued in after conversion.
 - c. Upon conversion, Paul abandoned past errors but not past correctness, and he processed the past through faith so as to live victoriously in the present. **1CO 15:9-10; GAL 2:20-21.**
 - 3. The battle lines are drawn between God's truth and Satan's lies which corrupt our thinking and masquerade as reality.
- III. We all have pasts that can weigh us down and hinder progress in Christ.
- A. Past sins must be identified, renounced and repented of in biblical conversion. **MAT 3:6; PRO 28:13; JOB 34:31-32; ACT 3:19.**
 - 1. This gives one a clean slate upon which a better life in service to Christ may be written. **1CO 6:9-11.**
 - 2. Sins become identified with one's past, not his present or future. **1PE 1:13-14; 4:1-3.**
 - 3. Continuing sin after mercy invites judgment (**JOH 5:14**), grieves the Spirit

(**EPH 4:30; HEB 10:29**) and, if reverted to, calls one's election into question. **2PE 2:20-22.**

4. Successful processing of past sins depends on knowing what sin is, and this depends upon God's law. **1JO 3:4; ROM 4:15; PSA 119:128.**
 - a. God's word is light that exposes known and unknown darkness. **PSA 19:7-13.**
 - b. God's word is also light that relieves false burdens. **ROM 10:1-3; ACT 15:28; LUK 4:18.**
 - c. Remember Paul: it is the wrong that needs to be forsaken, not the right.
5. Successful present Christian living after conversion sees past sin as *remitted* (**ACT 2:38**), *washed away* (**ACT 22:16**) and *dominionless*. **ROM 6:1-2, 11-18.**
 - a. We know we are the objects of mercy (*Forbearance and compassion shown by one person to another who is in his power and who has no claim to receive kindness; kind and compassionate treatment in a case where severity is merited or expected*) and therefore have nothing to boast of before God. **ROM 3:27.**
 - b. Knowing we deserve no mercy makes us humble, and this allows for more grace to live victoriously now. **JAM 4:5-6.**
 - c. Having obtained such mercy, we are better fitted to understand and offer hope to others. **1TI 1:15-16.**