

# Learning from the Past

*“Now all these things happened to them for examples...”*

*1 Corinthians 10:11*

**I**t has been well said, “The only thing we learn from history is that we do not learn from history”. Hegel (1770-1831), the man who said these words, was a German philosopher who had a great influence over his successors such as Karl Marx.

The old German thinker was on to something. Too often we seem to repeat our mistakes of the past as though we had not made those mistakes before. We lament and wonder how often we must go down the wrong path before we will learn the lesson.

I have been young and now am old (Psalm 37:25), and I can certainly look back on my life and see ways I stumbled and missed opportunities for service to the Lord. I have confessed my sin and sorrow for not following more closely in the way of the righteous. Forgiveness has indeed been granted but regrets still linger because such memories are there in the first place.

Many of us can bring sorrow into today by reflecting on the past. We may grieve over the past but we know it is chiseled in stone and cannot be reconstructed. What really is productive is to learn from the past and then create a new future that is different.

A wonderful friend of mine had a very sinful life as a young man. The Lord turned him around and for many decades now he has been a powerful influence for good. His spiritual children rise up and testify of the way the Lord used him to bring them to the foot of the cross. Yet now our common adversary, Satan, seeks to torment him about his wayward days of youth.

Leave the past where it is. Hear its lessons and go in the strength of the Lord and make the future pleasing to Him and to yourself.

Although we shall never arrive at perfection in this journey through life, we can take heart that there is positive change day by day.

Paul expresses well what I am seeking to say, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect...one thing I do. Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal...” Philippians 3:12-14

Whatever your past—wasted youth, destructive habits that destroyed your family life, infidelity to your partner in marriage—remember that Jesus came, lived, died, and rose again to make it possible for ruined lives to be reclaimed, reorganized around the will of God and finally, in eternity, be an eternal monument to the glory of God.

*“Man of sorrows!”,  
what a name,  
for the Son of God who came,  
Ruined sinners to reclaim,  
Hallelujah what a Savior!*

*-Philip Bliss*

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