

Release the Burden of



Regret

■ by Kathy Krentkowski, MA, LCPC, LMHC

Webster's dictionary defines regret as a feeling of sadness, repentance or disappointment over something that has happened or been done.

We all have something to regret - unkind words spoken, bad habits continued, resolutions unfulfilled.

What matters is what we do with our regret, or maybe a better way to say it is what our regret does with us.

Regrets reflect a tender heart

If we are honest, we have all made mistakes, and perhaps said or done something we wish we could take back. This is regret. A tender heart knows regret. And like healthy nerve endings that alert us to pain and makes us recoil from a flame, regret tells us there is something to grieve and heal from. The pain that comes from regret can produce change.

Godly sorrow

Regret can draw us to salvation. Paul tells us that "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10) and that it is God's kindness that brings us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Looking back at failures or missed opportunities should make us feel a sense of loss. We confront our humanity when we do this. To flippantly brush off the past, spouting a mantra of "I have no regrets in this life!" may be denying a part of your heart that God wants to take hold of, soften and change.



Releasing the burden

Ultimately, regret is a gift from God when it draws us to repentance, and that repentance draws us to the Savior. Releasing the burden of our regret to Jesus allows us to receive the gift of his salvation; this salvation is healing, wholeness, and deliverance. Paul continues his statement on godly sorrow by saying it "leaves no regret" (2 Corinthians 7:10, NIV).

Regret that goes on and on, is likely from the world or a weapon Satan is using against you. Satan doesn't want us to enjoy the forgiveness and salvation we can have from God when we allow our regrets to bring us to him. Releasing our

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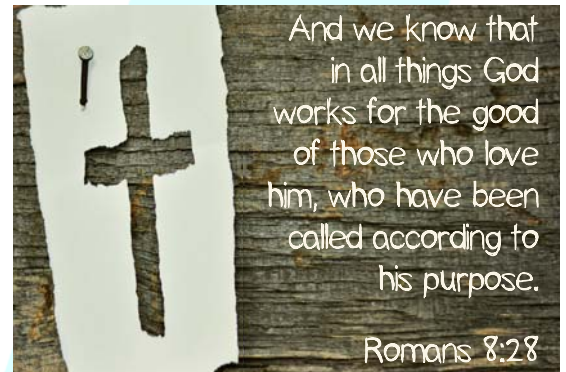
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past into God's hands makes renewal, rebirth, and beauty possible. It is a sort of exchange, where we take past mistakes or painful events and trade them in for forgiveness and salvation. When we do this "our faces shall never be ashamed" (Psalm 34:5). A life paralyzed by regret robs us of the greater sense of grace, gratitude, and joy that is in store for those who know Jesus has forgiven.

Our standing with God

Facing regret may leave us with the desire to remedy things we have done by making amends – making things right with others we have harmed. But if we never have an opportunity to do this, or if others will not accept our amends, we need not think our standing with God is harmed. God accepts us and can give us his peace and when he does this, he considers all you have and have not done. He accepts you where you are. In his hands, all things, the good and bad, are used to bring goodness and beauty (Romans 8:28). He doesn't waste one single thing. Your regret can be a catalyst for change.



Ask God to use your regrets

As you consider the ending of 2019 and the start of this New Year – 2020 – take some time to consider what, if any, regrets you have. Allow yourself to get honest and list your regrets. Feel the feelings associated with the regret. Take each regret, like a stone, and place it before God, asking for his forgiveness for any part you have played. Tell God he can take this stone and use it if he would like, in any way he would like. Allow him to use your past for good. As you give him your regrets, ask him if he has anything for you in return. Write it down, and let that be your anchor as you approach this New Year. Leave what is behind you in God's hands, and press on to your future that is ahead (Philippians 3:13-14). ■



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