

# Don't Get Stuck in the Past

Rick Railston

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Some people live in the moment. I admire people that just focus and live in the moment and enjoy the moment. My wife is that way. She enjoys flowers and such and lives in the moment. Other people kind of look to the future. I tend to be more like that, planning for the future and looking ahead. Farmers and business men have to do that. They have to plan the next step.

However, some people live in the past. In some ways, that's a very sad situation because people end up being stuck in the past. The past controls them. Let me give you some random examples. I'm not speaking of anyone specifically, but a composite of situations. In the church, a mother had a daughter and that daughter was abused when she was a young teenager. Every day this mother lives like it was twenty years ago. She is unable to get over this horrible incident that happened. She can't let it go, and every day that incident, twenty years later, dominates her thinking and her emotions.

In the church, sometimes mates continue hurtful behavior toward one another over years. As an example, a husband's abusive behavior towards his wife with physical abuse, mental abuse. After going on a tirade with broken this and abused that, he says he is sorry. After much tears, then for a period of time, this man behaves himself. It could be a matter of a few days, a week or two or even a month, but then he reverts back to his past behavior and the cycle starts over again and again. Sometimes it can go on for some ten, fifteen, or twenty years of living in the past, doing things in the past, repeating the past.

I've mentioned before that my mom was that way. She and my dad are dead now of course. A year or two after they got married, my mom asked for a dress. For whatever reason (I still don't know), my dad said "No." I don't know if it was financial. I have no idea. However, periodically, as we grew up and when we were adults and then toward the end of her life, she would bring that up. For 50+ years, she would not let it go. She held it against my dad. She was living in the past. Living in the past influences one's behavior for decades.

So what we are going to talk about today is this problem of getting stuck in the past, because to one extent or another, it affects all of us, because all of us remember things that happened. Some of them we have a hard time letting go of. As we approach the Passover, this is a good time to let go of those things.

**First point: Humans tend to repeat past behavior even when it doesn't work.**

I was reading an article about this and a psychologist said: "We need to repeat what is familiar, even if it does us harm." Human nature has a tendency to repeat things that

are familiar and even comfortable. The psychological term is called, "repetition compulsion." It is a compulsion to repeat what we have done before. Human beings seek comfort in the familiar. Let me give you some examples. Sometimes we watch our favorite movie over and over again over the years. You can almost repeat the dialogue. We know every scene. It's comfortable. It's nice to sit and watch this movie because, for whatever reason one really likes it.

Another repetition compulsion would be when you go to a specific restaurant, one orders the same thing. I do this all the time. I find something in the restaurant that I like and that's what I will order. I don't want to experiment with something else because I might not like it, so we go to the same restaurant and I order the same thing every time.

Another one might be driving the same route to a destination. As an example, we used to take a friend to services after her husband died. We would pick her up and then drive through town to get onto the freeway. She was a notorious back seat driver. We would kid about it. I would go my favorite way, and I could hear this mutter in the back seat saying, "If you turn left up here, it's shorter." Then I would go a bit further and she would say, "If you turn there, you can get to the freeway this way." I would say, "Are you trying to be a back seat driver here?" Then we would all laugh.

But the fact is that we do what is familiar and it's comfortable. The examples I've just given you are innocuous. They're harmless. No one is harmed from that. We all develop habit patterns over the years. Some are positive and some are negative, but they become ingrained in us. Particularly at times of stress or times of worry, we repeat what is familiar and what kind of feels safe.

However, there are harmful behaviors that people can also repeat. You would think that doesn't make sense. Why would someone repeat a behavior that is harmful? I can't tell you the number of times, let's say, that a young girl has an abusive dad and then she grows into her late teenage years or becomes an adult woman and she chooses a husband just like her abusive father because it's comfortable, it's familiar. You would think that people would learn about that, but it becomes a perversely, comfortable behavior and that cycle is repeated.

In other cases, people who repeatedly date those who are emotionally and physically abusive to them. You'd think the first time you met a guy or a gal that was abusive, you would say, "Well, I'm going to look for someone different." Too often the next one is just the same, and then they marry someone just like that.

People repeatedly, when they are under stress, take drugs. People repeatedly, when they are under stress, drink too much. Then bad things happen, but then down the road they get under stress again and repeat the cycle. As Dr. Phil often says, "How's that working for you?" You would think it would elicit change, but oftentimes it does not.

You see, in spite of not wanting to react this way, over the years, people create very powerful habit patterns. They then become very familiar and, in a perverse way, they

become comfortable. To react differently although more positively, it would feel foreign or uncomfortable to them.

When somebody has done the same thing year after year after year, the odds are they will continue to do so even if it causes them harm or harm to others because it is familiar and because it is comfortable. That is repetition compulsion.

Let's turn to a scripture where God tells us that we cannot repeat bad behavior. In fact, He tells us not to. Turn to Ephesians 4 and start in verse 22. I'll read it from the New King James because the language is just a little more comfortable in that regard. It doesn't change the meaning.

***Ephesians 4:22.*** *that you put off [get rid of], concerning your former conduct [behavior], the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23) and be renewed [make new] in the spirit of your mind, 24) and that you put on the new man [not repeat the old man] which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. (NKJV)*

He's giving some examples now.

*24) Therefore, putting away lying ... (NKJV)*

If you lied before, and God had called you and given you His spirit, put away lying.

*24b) ... "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. (NKJV)*

Then he gives another example in verse 26.

*26) "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27) nor give place to the devil. (NKJV)*

Meaning if you let the sun go down on your wrath, you are giving place to the devil.

There's another example in verse 28.

*28) Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*

Here's another example.

*29) Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.  
29) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

Then he tells us what to distance ourselves from:

*30) Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (NKJV)*

Then he substitutes that with:

*31) And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (NKJV)*

Let's go forward to Colossians. Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 are two good scriptures to remember and put in your mind. In Colossians 3:10, they address the same subject, but a little differently.

**Colossians 3:10.** *and have put on the new man [not the old one] who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him [Christ] who created him [the new man],*

*11) where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*

*12) Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; (NKJV)*

This is what the new man would do.

*13) bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

*14) But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.*

*15) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. (NKJV)*

We are called to be peaceful rather than repeating the same behavior that causes chaos and trouble.

*16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ... (NKJV)*

You see, these scriptures, Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3, speak to a change of mind. They speak to rejection of past behavior. That is only possible through the holy spirit. That is the only way it can be done.

Now let's look at the second point we need to address.

**Second point: We cannot keep going back to ungodly behavior.**

We will look at a Biblical example of getting stuck in the past, repeating past sinful behavior.

Today we're going to look at Samson. If you remember the example of Samson, he repeated sinful behavior with women over and over and over. Remember also, he was under a Nazarite vow from birth. Judges 13 talks about that. Let's go now to Numbers, chapter 6 and let's look at the characteristics and conditions of a Nazarite vow. Samson's parents were visited and told that this birth would occur and that he was going to be a Nazarite from the time he came out of the womb. These are the conditions:

**Numbers 6:1.** *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,  
2) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, (NKJV)*

The Nazarite vow was about separation. Here's the first condition.

*3) He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried.  
4) All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.  
5) All the days of the vow of his separation ... (KJV)*

Now we come to the second condition.

*5b) ... there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separates himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.  
6) All the days that he separates himself unto the LORD ... (KJV)*

Now we get to the third condition.

*6b) ... he shall come at no dead body.  
7) He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die ... (KJV)*

Meaning he could not touch his parents or his brother's or sister's dead body as part of this vow.

*7b) ... because the consecration of his God is upon his head.  
8) All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Eternal. (KJV)*

With these three conditions in mind, let's go to Judges, chapter 14 and pick up the story of Samson. Let's watch his behavior, especially with regard toward repeating past behavior that didn't work. It was a disaster.

**Judges 14:1.** *And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. (KJV)*

Timnath is located about ten miles west of Jerusalem. It's on the border with Philistia. Rather than staying in his own country, he goes twenty miles away, right on the border with Philistia, and he found a woman he liked.

*2) And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. (KJV)*

For whatever reason, he is obviously attracted to Philistine women. He apparently did not hate evil and he didn't fear evil. He didn't fear God's commandments that were known about doing that. He wanted his parents to intervene as was customary in those days, to arrange the marriage.

*3) Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that you go to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleases me well. (KJV)*

He didn't heed the command not to intermarry, especially with the Canaanites. You can check that out in the first three verses of Deuteronomy, chapter 7. God commanded that so that they don't intermarry so they would not be led astray religiously and start worshipping the gods of the Canaanites.

*4) But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.*

You see, God was using Samson's weaknesses for God's own purposes.

*7) And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.  
8) And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.*

*9) And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion. (KJV)*

He violated his Nazarite vow that we read in Numbers 6.

I'll just summarize the remainder of Judges 14 and 15 for lack of time.

His wife betrayed him by revealing a confidence that he had told her and she betrayed him to other Philistines. Then her father gave his wife to his companion, as the King James says. There is speculation that it could have been his interpreter. Somebody that was with him when he came to visit. So his wife has been given away. She

betrayed a confidence. As a result, Samson was furious. He burned the Philistines' fields with the foxes and the tails tied together and all of that. As a result of that, the Philistines came back to the father and his wife and the Philistines burned both of them.

I think we can safely say that his involvement with the Philistine woman ended badly. It didn't work. It was not productive.

Now let's go to Judges 16. Let's see what happens next.

***Judges 16:1. Then went Samson to Gaza ... (KJV)***

Now Gaza was the largest and the southern most of the five principle Philistine cities. It was fifty miles west of Jerusalem on the coast. Who did he go see?

*1b) ... and saw there a harlot, and went in unto her. (KJV)*

You would think he would learn from his past experience, but he didn't. He went not only to a Philistine woman, he went to a harlot. He didn't learn. Then guess what happened.

*4) And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. (KJV)*

It's interesting that the Hebrew word for "Sorek" means, *vine stock yielding purple grapes*. The Bible doesn't say, but did he violate his Nazarite vow by going to a place that is famous for wine and growing grapes? Did he violate his Nazarite vow again? We don't know for sure, but he could have.

So we see here that his first wife was a Philistine, then he went to the harlot and then he went to Delilah. They were all Philistine women. We know the rest of the story. The Philistine leaders came to Delilah and they wanted her to entice Samson because they wanted to know the source of his tremendous strength. So she went to him and appealed to him and three times he told her a lie and three times they rushed in and thought they had him and nothing happened. In fact, they paid for it with bruises and getting beat up. But the fourth time, he told her the truth and she succeeded. She had his head shaved and then his power disappeared. You see, he flirted with sin. The third time he mentioned his hair. He got a little closer and a little closer and the fourth time he told her the truth, and he violated his Nazarite vow once more and he lost his power.

Let's summarize Samson's repeated sinful behavior. Three Philistine women, one after the other, and he repeatedly broke his Nazarite vow. He had contact with a dead animal, possibly he drank wine and the third time, he brought his hair into the equation with the encounter with Delilah and the fourth time his head was shaved and he broke his Nazarite vow again.

Look at the fruit of this behavior. He lost his strength, he became a prisoner of the Philistines and he had his eyes put out. Again, it ended very, very badly. The key point is that he kept repeating the same sins over and over and over. You would think he would learn, but he did not.

We understand that God was using Samson to take care of the Philistines. However, if Samson had changed at any point in this process before losing his strength, God would have gotten to the Philistines some other way.

God gives us plenty of warnings about this. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 6 and read verse 18. This is a principle that Samson would have done well to observe, but he chose not to. He made a decision and paid for that decision. Paul is talking to this dysfunctional Corinthian church and he is trying to give them some advice.

**1 Corinthians 6:18.** *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. (KJV)*

The principle here is to flee sin. It gives the specific example of fornication, but the point is to flee sin.

Let's go now to 1 Timothy 6 and begin in verse 7. Here he is talking to Timothy, a young minister and he is becoming more specific now in his instructions. I'll read it from the New Living Translation. It makes it a bit clearer.

**1 Timothy 6:7.** *After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it.*

*8) So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.*

*9) But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction.*

*10) For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. (NLT)*

Now we get to the point.

*11) But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things ... (NLT)*

Don't just turn your back on them, don't just step aside. He says to run from them. Get out of there.

*11b) ... Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. (NLT)*

Now in his second letter to Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:22, he repeats it again. He wants to make sure that Timothy gets the message.



**2 Timothy 2:22.** *Flee also youthful lusts ... (KJV)*

Because Timothy was a young man.

*22b) ... but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (KJV)*

You see, these scriptures that Paul is talking about require a drastic change of behavior, from going from the old person to a new person, of going from the old behavior to the new behavior, going from the carnal way to God's way.

Samson did not learn at all from his sins or his errors in judgment. He didn't learn a thing until the very end. He was stuck in the past, he didn't change and it ultimately cost him his life. There is a huge lesson for us as we close out this second point.

We all sin. None of us are sin free. We sin. We go to God and we repent. We go to God and we are sorrowful. But the point is that we cannot repeat the same sins over and over. If we repeat the same sins, and get on our knees and say, "God, I'm sorry. I'll never do this again." Then we do it again. What does that tell God? We never repented in the first place. We don't really want to get rid of it all that badly because we keep repeating it over and over. We cannot keep going back to ungodly behavior because it does not work, as Samson proved.

**Third point: We can choose to move on from the past.**

We don't have to get stuck in the past. We don't have to live in the past. We can move on from the past. If we have sinned greatly in the past, and all of us have, we can choose to repent and then choose to move on and not repeat it.

Why can we do that? Let's look at 1 John. This is the beauty of God's way. This is the beauty of God's plan of salvation. We can choose to move on. John speaks directly with short, crisp sentences.

**1 John 1:7.** *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and [if we walk in the light] the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. (KJV)*

That's how we can move forward, because our sins, our conscious is cleared when we repent.

**Psalm 103:12.** *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. (KJV)*

We can be forgiven and we can move on. Because of God's love for us, we don't have to be stuck in the past.

Let's say if you grew up in an unloving home, maybe in an abusive home, and you saw horrible things in that home. We have to realize that we didn't choose our parents. We had no voice in the matter. The problem is, you see, when trouble occurs in the home, it's normal for the kids to assume it's their fault. When there's a divorce, for example, one of the problems is the children of that divorce (especially if they're young kids) they come away thinking that somehow it is their fault. If they had been better, if they would have loved their mom and dad more, if they had done their chores more often, mom and dad wouldn't be getting a divorce. They assume it's their fault. But the fact is, if you grew up in a home like that, you need to realize that what your parents did is not your fault at all, and you don't have to repeat their sins. You don't have to repeat the behavior you saw at home when you were a kid. Yet all too often that behavior gets repeated generation after generation, the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.

We're going to see later that we can choose our future. It's up to us. We can choose our future and our friends. We can choose our mates, and we can choose the kind of mind we will have. Philippians 2:5 tells us it should be the mind of Christ.

We can even choose what we think about. We can make that choice. Let's look at Philippians 4. We can choose to think about the past, all the negativity, and it becomes a habit pattern. It becomes perversely comfortable in some ways or we can do what we are admonished to do in Philippians 4. This is directed to the church.

***Philippians 4:8.** Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (KJV)*

We have the power and the ability through the holy spirit to focus our mind on these things and turn our mind away from evil thoughts, hurtful thoughts, hateful thoughts, things that have happened in the past. Draw that curtain and move on.

**Fourth point: To avoid past behavior, we must focus on the future.**

We must focus forward and not in the past. It's hard to drive a straight path in a car when you're looking in the rearview mirror. You can't do it. If we are looking in the rearview mirror all the time, we will not follow God's path. We will not follow a straight path.

Focusing on our reward makes the trials of this life and stuff that has happened in the past; it makes it bearable. In some ways, it makes it even understandable, especially when you realize, "I didn't get to choose my parents. I didn't get to choose what I saw. I didn't get to choose what somebody did to me." Looking forward is the key.

Let's go to John 6. These are the promises. This is the future that we must focus on. Christ is giving new and spiritual information that these people had never heard before.

**John 6:44.** *No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him ... (KJV)*

If we've been drawn, if we have repented, if we have been baptized, we have the indwelling of God's holy spirit, then this next phrase applies to us.

*44b) ... and I will raise him up at the last day. (KJV)*

That is our future. That is the promise. Now to verse 54.

*54) Whoso eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (KJV)*

These are strong promises that we must focus on.

Now let's turn to Romans and see what Paul said to the church at Rome and, by extension, to us today. Paul adds to what Christ said.

**Romans 8:10.** *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin ... (KJV)*

The lust of the flesh has no control over us. It's dead.

*10b) ... but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

*11) But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, [here's the promise] he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you. (KJV)*

The Greek word for "quicken" is Strong's 2227, and it means *to make alive, or give life*. "Mortal" is Strong's 2349, and it means *liable to die*. Paul is saying that we have a body that's going to die. It's just a matter of time. It's going to die, but you can have your bodies made alive, changed to a spirit body, if we follow Jesus Christ, if we follow the Father, if we have God's spirit dwelling in us. That is just an unbelievable promise that we must focus on.

Now let's go to 1 Corinthians 15. Paul adds more detail about what is going to happen and what our future holds. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection, and Paul is addressing this.

**1 Corinthians 15:16.** *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:*

*17) And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. (KJV)*

You've had no one pay the penalty for your sins. You've had no resurrection, and there is no hope.

*18) Then they also which are fallen asleep [dead] in Christ are perished.*

*19) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

20) But now is Christ risen [He's not saying "if"] from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

51) *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

52) *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

(KJV)

What a promise.

53) *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

54) *So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal [this body that's going to die] shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

57) *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)*

Death is not a pleasant thing to go through. We've seen many people have just a slow decline and then a death that shows us that this physical life is not where our focus should be. We are all susceptible to that. So death is not a pleasant thing to go through. But if our focus is on the ultimate reward, then it makes death just a pause. Death is not a catastrophe. It's a pause toward eternal life. It's a pause towards God's kingdom.

Finally, in this point, let's go to 1 Peter 1, beginning in verse 3. This is in regard to our focus being on our future.

**1 Peter 1:3.** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (NKJV)*

It's not a dead hope. It's a living hope for all of us.

4) *to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, [notice this] reserved in heaven for you,*

If we are faithful, it is reserved in heaven for us.

5) *who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

6) *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, (NKJV)*

All of us have. You look at the update, and it gets longer and longer the closer we get to Passover.

*7) that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,  
8) whom having not seen you love ... (NKJV)*

We love Jesus Christ and we love the Father. We've seen neither one.

*8a) ... Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,  
9) receiving the end of your faith ... (NKJV)*

What is that hope? What is that end?

*9b) ... the salvation of your souls [The Greek means, your life]. (NKJV)*

Focusing on our salvation makes our trials not so all consuming, where they overwhelm and overcome us.

You see, if our future is our focus, we will not get stuck in the past. That's the key. Our focus has to be on the future. That will take our mind away from the past.

**Fifth point: We get to choose our future.**

What a joy. It's up to us. We get to choose. We have nothing imposed upon us. We get to choose. God sets before us two distinct paths.

Let's go to Deuteronomy 30 and look at these two paths. Physical Israel was given physical promises and physical blessings if they chose the right path, but the two paths don't change. We'll get into our promises in a minute, but the two paths are there. They were there for Ancient Israel. They are there for all mankind and they are there for us in particular. Here Moses is summarizing the last forty years coming out of Egypt and he says:

***Deuteronomy 30:15.*** *See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil; (KJV)*

It's our choice; life and good, death and evil.

*16) In that I command thee this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the LORD your God shall bless you in the land whither you go to possess it. (KJV)*

This was their future. This was their blessing. Yes, it was physical, but it sure beats the alternative.

*17) But if your heart turns away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; (KJV)*

That's why the prohibition against worshipping the gods of Canaan.

*18) I denounce unto you this day, that you shall surely perish [they would die physically], and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land [they would die an early death], whither you pass over Jordan to go to possess it.*

*19) I call heaven and earth to record this day against you ... (KJV)*

When we were baptized, that same thing happened. Heaven was watching. The angels were watching. The Father and the Son were watching, because we were making a commitment as we sat in that tank or river or whatever. We were at a crossroads.

*19b) ... that I have set before you life and death [two roads], blessing and cursing [two roads]: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live: (KJV)*

Samson chose death. Samson chose the wrong path. That's an example for us. We have a choice here.

*20) That you may love the LORD your God, and that you may obey his voice, and that you may cleave unto him: for he is your life ... (KJV)*

Is that ever true!

*20b) ... and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. (KJV)*

As I said, these were physical promises to a physical nation. If you obey, you will be physically blessed. You will have peace, long life, good crops and rain in due season. Your kids will grow up in a peaceful land.

We know that not only do we have physical promises, but we have also have spiritual promises. Let's turn to Galatians 6. The same promises of a spiritual nature are set before us, but the path is the same as it was for Ancient Israel. There are two distinct paths, good or evil. There were people saying you can have it both ways. There are people today that say you can have it both ways. Someone told me a while back that everyone is going to be saved. Nobody will be lost. They will all repent even in the tribulation or at the last of their life, they will repent and not one will be lost.

**Galatians 6:7.** *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.*

*8) For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (KJV)*

You see, our future is in our own hands. Life or death; it is in our own hands. It is our choice.

Now, let's look at everything we've said to this point and draw some conclusions. We've seen that humans tend to repeat past behavior even though it doesn't work and it creates a disaster. It's just part of human nature. We've seen the example of Samson. He repeated his past sins to his own hurt, to the hurt of other people and even to the loss of his life.

We've also seen though that we can choose to move on from the past. It's a choice to move on from the past. To avoid past behavior, we've seen that we have to focus on the future and not in the past, and not try to go forward with our head turned around looking out the back window. It doesn't work.

The final point was that we get to choose our future.

Now let's look at the example of the apostles after the angel freed them from prison. Let's go to Acts, chapter 5. They were freed from jail, but they went on preaching the gospel.

**Acts 5:26.** *Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. (KJV)*

They went out preaching the gospel. The captain and the soldiers found them and brought them back.

*27) And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,  
28) Saying, Did not we directly command you that you should not teach in this name? and, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. (KJV)*

All they were thinking about were themselves. They didn't care about the truth or that Christ was the Messiah or not.

*29) Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. (KJV)*

They chose to obey God and let God protect them no matter what happened. They put their faith and confidence in God. They did not put their confidence in men or men's systems. You see, every day, like those apostles did at that moment, we have choices to make. Do we repeat the same old unsuccessful behavior over and over again?

Even though it's familiar, even though it's possibly comfortable, do we keep repeating the same old mistakes and sins over and over?

I can't tell you the number of times a person calls, and I'll give you a composite of over the years. Somebody calls and we repeat the same conversation every time they call. It feels like a broken record. Pick up the phone, and somebody says, "This is so and so." Then they start into a monologue. It's the same monologue they gave me the week before and the week before and the week before, over and over. They will say, "You've got to listen to this. You've got to pay attention to that." Most of it is gossip. "Did you hear what so and so is doing?" Perhaps about a leader of some other group, or what some other group is doing. They say, "You've got to step in and do something about it. You guys need to know this." They goes on and on. Yet the person on the other end of the line doesn't have a family because they've lost their family. They lost their job or can't hold a job, disfellowshipped from other groups, has no friends because they keep preaching as they do with me over the telephone. They judge others and tell them what they should be doing. This is a prime example of getting stuck in the past. It's like a broken record. We need to get off this. When can we jump off this cracked record? When can we go forward and not look backward? Yet people choose to get stuck in the past. They choose not to change.

Do we look to God and His word for how we ought to behave to get rid of this unproductive, unsuccessful behavior?

The unconverted mind says this: "All my problems are somebody else's fault. It's this person's fault, that person's fault, my parent's fault, my mate's fault, it's society, it's where I grew up, it's the school I went to, and on and on. That is the evidence of an unconverted mind.

The converted mind says, "You know I've had a problem with this person and that person and I've had a situation over here. You know, maybe I'm part of the problem. I'm the common denominator. Maybe it is me." That's why David said, "God, against You and You only have I sinned. I sinned. I did it." He finally came to that conclusion.

With that in mind, let's turn to Matthew 7 and begin in verse 21. This is the Sermon on the Mount, and Christ is telling them something new, a spiritual application to a very physical law.

**Matthew 7:21.** Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.  
(KJV)

That can't get more plain. What is the will of his Father in heaven? It is summarized by the two great commandments: Love God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself. But it tells us in the first part of verse 21 that not everybody is going to be in the Kingdom of God. Not everybody is going to make it. It is their choice.



*22) Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? (KJV)*

We've done all of these things. We have built colleges. We've published books. We've been on television and radio shows. All of these things we have done (putting it today's vernacular). Back then they would say, "Haven't we built the temple or haven't we done this or that?"

*23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity.*

*24) Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine ... (KJV)*

That's the first part. You've got to hear it.

*24b) ... and does them ... (KJV)*

That's the second part.

*24 continued) ... I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: (KJV)*

There are two things, hear and do.

*25) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ... (KJV)*

This is obviously an analogy to our trials.

*25b) ... and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock [Jesus Christ, our Savior].*

*26) And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: (KJV)*

That person doesn't really understand the basics of Christianity, the foundation, the fundamental parts of Christianity.

*27) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (KJV)*

Meaning the loss of eternal life.

So the point is, we must daily choose to build our house on a rock, and that rock is the life of Jesus Christ. He looked to His Father and said, "The Father is greater than I and I am only here to do the will of the Father. So we look to both of them, God being the principle, the one who is the author of all things. We look to them to base our life upon.

The point is that we have a daily choice to make, sand or rock; God or Satan. It's our choice. Life or death; it's our choice. We must not get stuck in the past like Samson did. We must look to God, we must follow His word and we have to change ourselves as we read in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3. We have to change ourselves from the old person to the new person, and that new person is created in the image of Jesus Christ, the example that He set for us as He walked this earth. As we get close to Passover, that is where we have to evaluate ourselves. Christ walked this earth. How did He behave? What did He say? What did He do? How did He treat people? Then we compare that example to our example this past year and compare the two. If there is a difference, we've got to get rid of those differences. Keep the things that are like Jesus Christ and eliminate the things that are unlike Christ. That's why we examine ourselves before Passover.

We still have a few days before the Passover, so let's continue in that process to examine ourselves and to change into the image of Jesus Christ.