

If Only...

Too often, “If only” qualifies something that should have been done or said but due to this reason or that rationalization, it went unaccomplished, unattended, unsaid or undone. Often, the loads of life with their prioritized pursuits press us into a mold so restrictive we could never have imagined it and out of which we futilely struggle to escape, while the hustle and bustle of living seemingly commands every nanosecond of our time to the point that we just can’t “keep up.” Finally, we just want to step off the merry-go-round and let ‘er spin, which only leaves us feeling negligent, guilt-ridden and... “If only.” Someone once said, if you take a wish in one hand and spit in the other; all you get is a wet hand.

I’ve heard people say, “If only I had a million dollars” when it is quite evident that they don’t manage the hundred dollars they have very well. It seems counterproductive to toss good money after bad. Likewise, I am constantly grateful for God’s patience with me, and many others, I’m sure, when we thoughtlessly skew our priorities. Yet, He remains patient with us (2 Peter 3:9).

An argument can be made that our intentions often exceed our abilities; reality can be rough on the senses when we are dulled by the fantasy that we can do everything, and still do some of it well. Many an optimistic “to-do” list has gone undone because life has limits. What we would like to do is often crowded out by what we feel we must do, and then there is the maintenance of “keeping on keeping on,” which displaces the well-intentioned philanthropy and good-will that is jettisoned in order to maintain our personal rat-race.

To do what we do well is more often a matter of planning and purpose (1 Corinthians 9:7); it is not accidental, it is well planned with conviction to the task and implemented with resolve. That is what we do when something is important. It is folly to expect the opportunities to do good (Galatians 6:10) to be sufficiently attended on a whim. This is particularly the case concerning obedience to God and securing our salvation... it won’t be accidental.

If we are to even begin the process of redeeming our time (Ephesians 5:16) and redirect it to more productive, godly purposes (Matthew 6:33), we must **plan** to do them. Plan to attend church events, plan to be at every assembling of the saints, and plan to study your Bible daily (even multiple times daily); such things are not accomplished on a lark. We must take every opportunity because *“to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”* (James 4:17).

What a sad moment, to meet the Maker, having spent sixty, seventy, eighty or more years on this earth, encountering opportunities to change our life and the lives of others for eternity, with only an “If only....”