



“If Only We Had Known...”

Kevin Presley

They tell us that hindsight is 20/20. Of course, none of us know the future; if we did, life would certainly turn out a lot different. Because we don't know the future, we make choices that lead us down various pathways in life that come to a crossroads, and we perhaps take the wrong road from time to time. Giving us occasion to say, *if only we had known how this would turn out, if only we had known the consequences of our choice, we would've chosen differently.*

That is a theme that is found even in the scriptures. In our text passage, Paul uses one of his favorite words pertaining to the gospel, the word *mystery*. As he uses it here, it means *something that is veiled or hidden*.

I Corinthians 2:7-8 “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Paul says that the scheme of redemption was kept *secret* in the mind of God. Not unknown to God; rather conceived in the mind of God—and from eternity past at that—and God hid it until Jesus came into the world and accomplished God's plan. Then the Holy Spirit came and revealed it unto man. Well, why did God do it that way? Why was the gospel a *mystery* throughout ages of time? Paul cites one reason in this passage. He says *had the princes of this world* (that is, the enemies of God and those who seek to thwart the welfare and salvation of mankind) *known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*. They would not have been complicit in the death of Jesus Christ because the crucifixion of Jesus was the very final nail in Satan's coffin as it were. So, why would Satan have been complicit in something that would ultimately be his demise and defeat?

Remember long before, in the garden of Eden, how the woman was deceived by the serpent and she and Adam transgressed the will of God. God then cursed the woman and cursed the serpent telling them that He was going to place *enmity* between their seeds, and the seed of the woman would one day

crush the head of the serpent, but not before the serpent bruised the heel of the seed of the woman (**Genesis 3:15**). To what was that referring? That's what we call the *primal prophecy* in the scriptures; the very first foregleam of Calvary. God is simply saying that as Satan would inflict pain and suffering upon the seed of the woman—that is, Christ, the Son of God—in the very same act, He—Christ—would turn about and crush the head of the serpent. So, Paul is telling us here that had the princes of this world known what they were doing in crucifying Jesus, they would not have crucified Him. If only they had known...

Some time ago, I turned on the news and was watching a story of a tragic plane crash unfold live on television. Every single person aboard that plane lost their lives. I couldn't help but think, *if only they had known, they wouldn't have boarded that plane*. Of course, no one in their right minds would board such a plane, knowing what its fate would be. Life is full of such tragedies and circumstances. If a person had known they were going to get into a terrible car accident, they might not have left the house that day, or maybe they would've taken an alternate route or simply gone somewhere else. Sometimes we get into relationships and circumstances in life, making choices that we have no way of knowing how it's going to end. If we DID know, we would've chosen a different path. Sometimes a man or woman marries the wrong person, but it turns out that they didn't know each other like they thought. The marriage ends in a bitter divorce or some horrible set of circumstances and they are often filled with regret, even if they really had no way of knowing. They each no doubt think, *if only I had known, I would not have married that person*.

Spiritually, there are many things that we get into in life that had we only looked ahead, we would've avoided those things. In this particular case, the Bible actually gives us warnings, telling us to avoid these circumstances and situations in life. If we defy or ignore what the word of God says, we are certainly inviting trouble into our lives.

Psalm 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Psalm 17:4-5 "Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."

We can avoid a lot of trouble by simply listening to the word of God to begin with. Many people will live out their lives with very bitter regrets because they did not heed what the Bible says. *If only I had listened to God's counsel, if only I had paid attention to the history of other human beings, if only I had known, I would've made better decisions*. I am going to borrow that theme for a while today. I'm sure there are many things in your life, as there are in mine, that if only we had known, we would've lived life differently. We will focus on three areas in particular where I believe we could make a difference if only we could look into the future and see how things would turn out.

If only we had known the bitter fruit that sin would bear, we wouldn't have committed it. The Bible calls sin *deceptive*. We are not to be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (**Hebrews 3:13**). Sin is deceptive in a number of ways, primarily by making us think that we are in control and consequences only happen to other people, not us. Satan blinds us to the reality and the end result of our sins. A long time ago, Moses warned the people of God against this kind of thinking:

Numbers 32:23 " But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out."

The fact of the matter is, there is a payday someday for sin. There will come a reckoning day for the sins that we commit and the Bible tells us that it will be a very terrible thing. It will ultimately meet us in the judgment if we have unconfessed and unrepentant sin in our lives. But so many times, sin finds us out before we ever meet the Lord in the Day of Judgment. Sin finds us out in the lives that we live, with some very harsh, bitter and painful consequences.

Proverbs 13:15 “Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.”

Ultimately, a life of sin produces great pain and misery and difficulty.

Galatians 6:7-8 “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

Paul lets us know that this is something that is very easy to be deceived about. And what he is telling us ought to be a matter of common sense, but unfortunately, we allow ourselves to be blinded by Satan, because of the pleasures of sin. Contextually, Paul is talking about the giving of the Galatian brethren, saying that if they sow to things that pertain to the kingdom of God, to righteousness and those things that are holy and good, they will reap eternal benefit and blessing as a result. But, if they sow to carnal things of this life and this earth, including the pleasures of the flesh and so forth, they will ultimately meet a tragic end, reaping only corruption.

What Paul is referring to is the immutable law of the seed or the law of the harvest: *every seed brings forth after its own kind*. I've pointed that out in various contexts on this program many, many times. It is an immutable principle of nature which God put into being in the very beginning of time. Whatever kind of seed you plant in the earth, it's going to bring forth the same kind of fruit. You don't plant corn and reap wheat. You don't plant tomato seeds and reap a vine full of watermelons. It doesn't work that way. You reap according to what you sow.

We understand that when we look over a field of grain or we plant our gardens or tend our flower beds. But, somehow, we become oblivious to that fact when we sow seed in the garden of life. Somehow, we think we can sow one kind of seed in our conduct, our behavior, our living and thinking, but we can reap another type of fruit, evading the consequences of sin. Paul said, *Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Sin will bear bitter fruit*. Moses said, *Be sure your sin will find you out*.

Sin “finds us out” in a number of ways. Sin might find you out in your health. Again, *the way of the transgressor is hard*. Oftentimes, that hardship is physical. Sin will shorten your life and ruin your health. If only we had known the situations that sin would get us into, we never would've succumbed to its temptations. Sin would've lost its appeal. But friend, look around you! The world is full of people who are suffering, who have ruined their lives whether it be physically, financially, emotionally, mentally...They have ruined their lives and they will suffer the consequences of their sin and bear the scars of their sin for the rest of their lives.

That ought to tell us something. The Bible warns us again and again that *the way of the transgressor is hard*. Physically, it's hard on our bodies and our minds when we live lives of sin and immorality. When a person goes out and takes that first alcoholic drink, he never imagines himself with cirrhosis of the liver or pictures himself as an alcoholic who can't hold a job, who ruins his health, destroying his future and dying a premature death. When a person lives a profligate and immoral lifestyle, committing fornication and adultery, they never envision themselves with some venereal disease or a disease that may even

end their lives. All they think about are the immediate pleasures and gratifications of sin. If only they had known, looking back, they never would've succumbed to the temptation of sin. We are warned, *the way of the transgressor is hard*.

But sin adversely affects the entire family; not just the individual. If we only knew what sin would do to our families, we would avoid it at all costs. So many times, we are so blinded by sin that we don't think about the fact that our very own behavior, our conduct and our choices can hurt the people that we claim to love the most. We don't think about the consequences our sin will have on a faithful wife or husband when the other spouse is unfaithful. The devastating consequences that immoral behavior will have on children when a home is ripped apart and a marriage ends in divorce. If parents who are so very selfish in many cases—could only look and see what divorce does to their children and where being raised in that kind of environment under those circumstances is going to lead them in life, maybe they would've tried harder to hold that marriage together and be the kind of husband and wife that the Bible commands them to be.

David's sin brought about some awful consequences, not only in his own body and his own life, but in the lives of his family. When he committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, then he conspired to have Uriah killed so that Bathsheba could be his, he was merely being driven by lust and covetousness, by the desire to gratify himself. Covering the evidence that he had committed adultery with another man's wife, conceiving a child. But that child that was conceived in that illicit relationship died. David shed many, many hot, bitter tears over his sin after the fact. In the time of his repentance, God told David what the consequence of his sin would be:

II Samuel 12:10 "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."

If you look at the life of David, you will see a trail of tears, heartache and bitter disappointment. Many of his children disappointed him greatly and brought a lot of heartache into his life. If only he had known that, how that would've changed his decision when he looked over and saw Bathsheba bathing on the rooftop and sent for her. Surely, he would've made a different choice that day if only he would've known the consequences of his sin. But the fact of the matter is that the Bible DOES warn us, *the way of the transgressor is hard*.

If only we had known the damage we would cause with our tongues, we would watch what we say.

Words are incredibly powerful.

James 1:26 "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

James 1:19 "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:"

James 3:5 "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

We don't think very much about the words that we speak. Words just sort of come out of our mouths before we really think about what we're saying sometimes, and we can end up getting into a lot of

trouble because of those words. Not only do we get into trouble at that moment, but those words can have a devastating impact on many lives for many years to come. Relationships can immediately be ruined because of a few hastily spoken words. A person's reputation can be irreparably harmed, destroyed, unfairly blackened because of some idle words of gossip or some untrue tale told about somebody else. We may come to realize that it wasn't true and we shouldn't have spread it, but in so many cases, the damage is done and it can't be gathered back up or undone. As James said, *a small spark can set a whole forest ablaze and destroy it!* That's how it is with the power of the tongue. Therefore, the Bible tells us to be very diligent and circumspect with how we speak and the words that we use. Do you speak harshly, rashly or angrily with other people? Do you allow your temper to get out of hand until you say things that you really don't mean in your heart of hearts? Yet those words have such a devastating impact upon others. Do you talebear and spread rumors or gossip and unfairly rob and destroy the reputation of others? We need to be very careful because if we could only see the damage that our words would do, it would make us more careful about what we say.

If only we had known how short life is, we would've given more attention to spiritual things.

The younger we are, the longer the life ahead of us seems to be. I remember very well being twelve and thirteen years old, thinking that I would never be sixteen. Turning sixteen and thinking I'd never be eighteen. I'd never be an adult. Thinking that the time would never come when I'd be in my twenties and out and independently functioning in life on my own. Every young person can identify with those thoughts and feelings. But if you've been around very long, you know that at some point, you cross this particular threshold of time and everything goes in the reverse; instead of looking ahead and thinking how long you have, you look back and think how short of a time it really has been and how little time you still have ahead. One day you look up and say, *my life is half gone. The life that I wished away just a few short years ago is now most likely half over.* That's the way it is.

One of these days we're all going to come to the sunset of life, if we don't meet some tragedy or untimely demise in the meantime, and we'll look back on life and realize just how short it truly was. Many will face that hour with some very sad and bitter regrets because those years they thought they had before them flew by, wasted. I'm reminded of the parable that Jesus told about the wise and foolish virgins. When the bridegroom came, the five wise virgins had prepared and filled their lamps with oil, but the foolish virgins had failed to prepare. Maybe they thought they had plenty of oil or plenty of time and opportunity to get more, but they met the bridegroom unprepared (**Matthew 25:1-13**).

This short parable of Jesus comes to mind as well:

Luke 12:16-20 "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Life passed him by. He wasted it and now he stood looking at eternity. If only he had known... One day, there will be many people, tragically, who say that very same thing. Spend your life wisely, obeying the Lord and preparing to meet Him in eternity.

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