

Frequently I encounter someone who is down because they are being judged by others. Trying to deal with these judgments is like trying to swim to safety through a mass of debris, or fly a mission through skies filled with flak. I have felt the same way many times, too.

I have come to the conclusion that you can do very little in a direct attempt to change people's attitudes. My philosophy is, "Do the best you can, and have no regrets," and I find myself recommending it to others.

Now the regrets that I refer to are those concerning how others may feel about us, not regret for the sin in our lives. It is not that we don't regret or admit our sin; it is that we don't regret our game plan, based on the fundamental principles by which we live. We have to live our lives knowing that in the thick of battle, we make mistakes; our sword missed; we nicked our comrades; but we know we fought with all of the fury and intensity we could muster.

'Regrets' point more to how people feel about us and what they think we did. It hurts us to think that our friends, and especially our family may believe some of the stories going around about us and think less of us as a result. For example, if you try to deal with the decline of your parents with humanity and dignity, there will be those who will think it a shame that you 'put them away'. But they can in no way understand what is really going on, and what is best for all concerned.

You have to concentrate on the people who do try to understand, those who love you and value you. These are the people who don't listen to the bad press. Embrace those who know your worth and ignore the rest.

We can't keep looking back and agonizing over things we can't control. As Jesus said in Luke 9:62, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." We must live for God, do the right thing, and let the chips fall where they may. We have to realize that it doesn't matter what other people think. It only matters what God thinks. We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). We will be frustrated if our goal is to be in the "power clique", or to be thought of as 'important'.

Remember that the Jews had to endure much slander. It was told of them, for instance, that they worshipped the pig as god. This came about because they would not eat this 'unclean' animal. Christ was slandered as well, having false witnesses who twisted the things he said. They claimed that he blasphemed God by claiming to be equal to Him (John 5:18). And the church, His body, had to endure the slanders that Christians met to eat and drink blood (the Lord's Supper), and that they were responsible for the burning of Rome (because they claimed that the world would end in fire).

People will always try to second-guess you as they consider what you have done. Your enemies, especially, will always proclaim the worst motives for you. You need to realize that the guilty are usually the loudest accusers; it makes their own crimes seem small. They turn the other way and won't look at you when you pass. You just have to consider them as potholes in the road, steer around them and move on.

Jesus lived among believers and unbelievers; those who loved Him and those who hated Him. In John 7:12 we read, "Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." He had to move among those who refused to believe His Goodness; they slandered Him and sought to kill Him. He illustrated the fact that it is not always practical to separate the good from the bad. In the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30) He stated that they would be allowed to grow together until the harvest. So we can't just expect for God to eliminate our opposition.

Peter in his first letter works very hard to make us see how Christ suffered even though he was perfect. If the very best is slandered, how can we who are sinful avoid it? Notice the example of Christ, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. (1 Peter 2:22-23)" This is the message in a nutshell! Let us then follow Him.

*Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

1 Peter 2:12

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