

Intro: I am grateful to God for all that He has done in my life. I think of where I would be if He had not intervened, and I shudder. But then I often also think of where I would be, what I could have done, if I had not wasted so much of my life. You may think me young, and I suppose you are right, but the fact that much of my life has been wasted is still true. Now don't get me wrong, I am not complaining. Have any of you wondered what you could have done, where you would be, if you hadn't wasted so much of your life?

1. What do I mean, 'Stand up'?

- a. Prov 24:16-17, We can make mistakes - we can stumble, but we are called to stand back up.
- b. Ecc 4:8-12, Do not try to stand alone.
- c. Prov 18:24, Friends and family here are great - and bearing one another's burdens is important (Gal 6:2), but there is one who sticks closer than a brother. You need him. With all three (You, Christ, Fellowship with other believers), you will not be easily broken.
- d. Ecc 5:4-7, Scripture tells us how dangerous it is to vow - but even though you should only do so with serious prayer, it is still an important tool. Ps 76:11.
- e. Matt 11:28-30, My father always described it as God getting into the yoke with you. It is an apt description.

Challenge: Are you still living in sin? Do you have a lifestyle problem with bitterness? With a murmuring and complaining heart? With pride? Study the scriptures on vows. The Lord will step in and deliver you. Isa 33:22

2. What was wasted can and will be restored. How does God restore the years to us?

- a. Isa 33:10-24 (Eccl 4:12), First we must walk uprightly. Don't lament your sin, repent your sin! John 8:11, 1 Pet 3:10-12 (which is quoting Ps 34:14)
- b. When you complete repentance, you don't just turn from evil - you turn to good. Now that you are a willing tool in God's hand, He will use you. Deut 30:3-14 (This was for the jews, but we are the new jews - the principles still apply)
- c. Rev 12:11, Our power comes from two fronts - the blood of the lamb, and the word of our testimony. What is that testimony? That we redeemed. Eph 2:1-10

Challenge: The greater the waste, the greater the testimony. The more impossible the conversion, the more miraculous the change. Do not bemoan the lost years, rejoice that God can use them to draw others to salvation. Titus 3:3-7.

3. Christ has chosen you for a mission. He has given you a task.

- a. Eccl 4:1, This whole world is oppressed. They have no comfort. Rom 8:22.
- b. John 14:16-18, This is why God sent the comforter.
- c. This is why we were chosen. Not for our strength, but for our weakness! 2 Cor 12:8-10.

Final Challenge: First you must turn from your sins, then you can be used by God to change the lives of others. This is the essence of repentance. Stand back up again. Stand and be restored.

Close: Regret is a normal human thing. The danger comes in the perspective. We view those years as wasted, like a crop that has been eaten by locusts. Scripture tells us to redeem the time, for the days are evil. Eph 5:16. We know that we did not do this, we spent years in vanity and pride (as the song says). And so, we have regret. We forget however that God is a master craftsman. He can make use of even the most useless things - He created the universe out of nothing after all!

Stand and be amazed at the master's work, as he creates usefulness out of waste - and ministry out of misery. Joel 2:25.

Final Song: At Calvary

Scriptures:

Prov 24:16

Stand Up

Ecc 4:8-12

Prov 18:24

Gal 6:2

Ecc 5:4-7

Ps 76:11

Matt 11:28-30

Isa 33:22

Restore

Isa 33:10-24

Eph 4:12

John 8:11

1 Pet 3:10-12

Ps 34:14

Deut 30:3-14

Rev 12:11

Eph 2:1-10

Titus 3:3-7

The Mission

Eccl 4:1

Rom 8:22

John 14:16-18

2 Cor 12:8-10

Eph 5:16

Joel 2:25

Closing Hymn: At Calvary

