

IF ONLY

If only – just two small words, but words which contain so much poignancy as they reflect the pain, anguish and bitterness locked up in the hearts of many people.

If only the one I loved so much had not died so
young.

If only I had better health.

If only I had said no when first offered drugs.

If only I could have my time over again – things
would be different now.

If only I had more money.

If only, if only, if only – words of regret, despair and hopelessness.



The problem with the '*if only*' syndrome is that it can't see beyond its own very limited sphere of vision. We lock ourselves into a painful 're-run' of events and wonder what might have been if things had turned out differently. The pain we feel shuts us in to inevitable hopelessness. We can see no solution and therefore we expect no answer to this endless round of despair. And even when an answer is suggested, we view it with suspicion and disbelief.

NOTHING NEW

This state of mind is not a 21st century phenomenon. Even in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, God described a people who had anxious minds and despairing hearts. He said of them, 'You live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. In the morning you will say, "*If only* it were evening!" and in the evening, "*If only* it were morning!" ' Have you ever felt like this?

The reason these people were like this was because they had rejected God; the solution was to turn back to God. But this is not always the case. In another book in the Old Testament, a very good man named Job was forced by a series of terrible circumstances that were not of his making to cry out eight times, 'If only'. Such was his anguish that he said, '*If only* I had never been born.' Then later, when he realized that the answer was with God, he said, '*If only* I knew where to find him: *if only* I could go to his dwelling!'

What both these Old Testament incidents show us is that, whatever the cause of our despair, the answer is always to be found in God. Job, in his misery, felt it was impossible to find God, and maybe you feel the same way. But the good news is that Job did find the answer: his prayers were answered, and he did find God.

GOD'S 'IF ONLY'

Listen again to God: '*I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea*' (Isaiah 48:17-18).

Every single problem faced by mankind, however it may manifest itself, stems from a broken relationship with God. But God only seeks our good. He only wants what is best for us, but sin has blinded us to this truth. We see God's commands as restrictive and narrow, and therefore we go our own way. The result is always devastating. *If only* is the symptom of a heart complaining about the consequences of its own sin, or complaining about the effects of sin in general in the world.

REAL PEACE - NO REGRETS

The answer to *if only* is to know the reality of sin forgiven and peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Temporary peace of mind can be found in many things, but lasting peace with God is found only in his Son, Jesus. This is possible because God sent Jesus into the world to deal with our sin and guilt. By dying on the cross, Jesus accepted the responsibility for our sin and took the punishment those sins deserved. Peace with God comes from salvation from sin.

When we know this peace, the *if only* of despair is replaced with an assurance that God will never leave us and never take from us the salvation we have in Jesus.

You can know this peace by confessing your sin to God, asking him for forgiveness, and trusting in Jesus alone to make you acceptable to God.

Text: Peter Jeffery

© DayOne Publications

www.dayone.co.uk

NEED TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST?

Please contact: Pastor WEI En Yi
Tel: 9834-0509
Email: weienyi@shalomrb.org

Come & Join us: Shalom Church Sunday Meetings
English Service (9.30 a.m.)
Chinese Service (2.30p.m.)
8, New Industrial Road, #03-01, S. 536200

