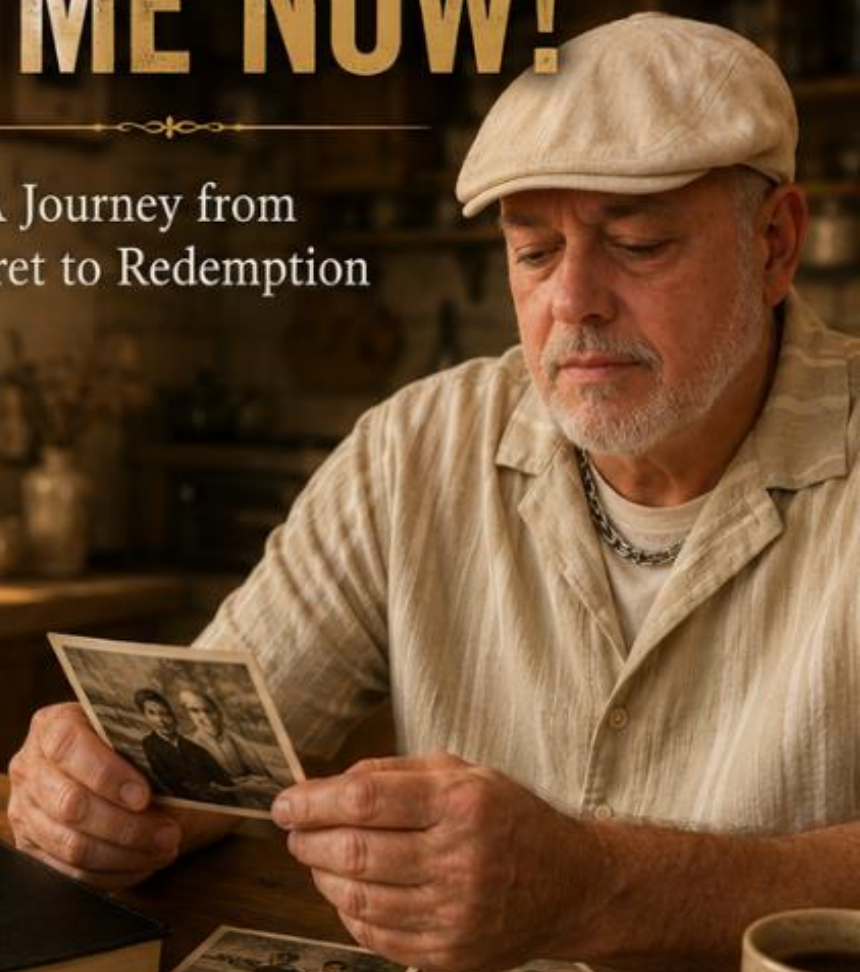


BUT LOOK AT ME NOW!

A Journey from
Regret to Redemption



CLAY KIRKSEY

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INTRODUCTION

THE PICTURE ON THE DESK

Have you ever looked at an old photograph and wondered what that person was thinking?

Maybe it was a picture from your childhood. Perhaps it was a high school graduation portrait, a wedding picture, a family gathering, or a snapshot from a season of life that now feels like a lifetime ago.

Photographs have a way of doing more than capturing a moment. They awaken memories, stir emotions, and transport us back to another place and time.

For some people, those memories bring joy.

For others, they become an invitation to regret.

A picture can remind us of mistakes we made, opportunities we missed, relationships that failed, or dreams that never materialized. Before long, our thoughts begin to drift:

"If only I had..."

"I wish I hadn't..."

"What was I thinking?"

The enemy loves those moments.

He loves to take a simple memory and turn it into a courtroom. He becomes the prosecutor, the evidence is our past, the charge is failure, and the sentence is shame.

If we're not careful, we'll sit there listening to accusations that Jesus settled at the cross long ago.

The devil has no new tricks. He simply keeps replaying old tapes.

He wants you looking backward when God is calling you forward. He wants you reliving your failures while God is revealing His faithfulness. He wants you focused on what went wrong while God is showing you what He has redeemed.

The Apostle Paul understood this battle.

If anyone had a past that could have haunted him, it was Paul. Before becoming one of Christianity's greatest leaders, he persecuted believers, opposed the church, and participated in acts he undoubtedly wished he could undo.

Yet Paul refused to allow yesterday to define tomorrow.

Listen carefully to his words:

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:
but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which
are behind, and reaching forth unto those things
which are before, I press toward the mark..."
(Philippians 3:13-14)

Notice that Paul did not deny his past.

He simply refused to live there.

There is a difference.

God never asks us to pretend our mistakes never
happened. He asks us to trust Him enough to
believe that His grace is greater than those mistakes.

Too many believers spend their lives looking in the
rearview mirror.

They're forgiven but still feel guilty.

They're redeemed but still feel ashamed.

They're accepted by God but still reject themselves.

The enemy keeps whispering:

"Remember what you did."

God keeps saying:

"Remember what Jesus did."

One voice leads to condemnation.

The other leads to freedom.

One keeps you bound to yesterday.

The other launches you into tomorrow.

Perhaps you've picked up this book because there are things in your past you wish had never happened. Perhaps you've made decisions you regret. Perhaps you've walked through failure, disappointment, heartbreak, or loss. Maybe you've spent years carrying burdens God never intended for you to carry.

If so, I have good news for you.

Your story is not over.

Your mistakes are not bigger than God's mercy.

Your failures are not greater than His grace.

And your past does not have the final word.

Jesus does.

As you read these pages, my prayer is that you'll discover a powerful truth:

God is not asking you to stare at where you've been.

He's inviting you to see what He has done.

And one day, when the enemy tries once again to remind you of your past, you'll smile, lift your head high, and declare:

"But look at me now."

CHAPTER 1

THE ENEMY'S FAVORITE WEAPON: REGRET

Regret is one of the enemy's most effective weapons because it requires no new ammunition. He simply uses old memories.

Unlike fear, which focuses on the future, regret focuses on the past.

Fear asks, "What if something bad happens?"

Regret says, "I wish that hadn't happened."

Fear worries about tomorrow.

Regret lives in yesterday.

Both rob us of today.

The dictionary defines regret as a feeling of sadness, disappointment, or remorse over something that has happened. By itself, regret is not necessarily sinful. In fact, there are times when regret can serve as a warning sign that something needs to change.

The problem comes when regret becomes a residence instead of a reminder.

God never intended for us to live there.

The enemy loves to trap believers in a cycle of replaying old failures. The conversation often sounds something like this:

"If only I had made a different decision."

"If only I had stayed."

"If only I had left."

"If only I had listened."

"If only I had waited."

"If only I had known."

The phrase "if only" can become a prison cell. Every time we repeat it, we reinforce the bars.

But here's the truth:

You cannot change yesterday.

You can only surrender it.

There is a tremendous difference.

Many people spend years trying to rewrite a chapter that God has already closed. Meanwhile, the Lord is trying to write a brand-new chapter right in front of them.

One of the greatest examples of this is Lot's wife.

As God delivered Lot and his family from Sodom, they were given a simple instruction:

"Don't look back."

Yet she did exactly that.

The result was devastating.

Why?

Because God was leading them toward a future, but her heart remained attached to the past.

Many Christians do the same thing spiritually.

They've been delivered, but they keep looking back.

They've been forgiven, but they keep revisiting old failures.

They've been redeemed, but they continue identifying with who they used to be instead of who they are in Christ.

The enemy understands something many believers have forgotten:

If he can keep you focused on where you've been, he'll hinder you from becoming who God created

you to be.

Think about driving a car.

The windshield is much larger than the rearview mirror for a reason.

The rearview mirror has a purpose, but it was never intended to be your primary focus.

Imagine trying to drive across town while staring only into the rearview mirror. Sooner or later, you would crash.

Yet many people attempt to navigate life that way every day. They're so focused on where they've been that they cannot see where they're going.

The Apostle Paul refused to live like that.

He understood that God's grace was not merely strong enough to forgive the past. It was strong enough to free him from it.

Paul's confidence wasn't in his performance.

It was in Christ's finished work.

The same is true for us.

Your hope is not found in your ability to go back and fix yesterday.

Your hope is found in the One who redeemed
yesterday and is preparing tomorrow.

That doesn't mean we ignore mistakes.

It means we learn from them and move forward.

A redeemed past becomes wisdom.

An unreleased past becomes bondage.

One teaches you.

The other torments you.

Friend, God is not asking you to carry the weight of
your past for the rest of your life.

Jesus already carried it to the cross.

When He declared, "It is finished," He wasn't
talking only about your sins.

He was talking about your guilt.

Your shame.

Your condemnation.

Your regrets.

Everything that separated you from God was nailed
to that cross.

The next time regret tries to knock on your door,
remember this:

You don't have to answer.

You are not who you were.

You are who God says you are.

You are forgiven.

You are redeemed.

You are accepted.

You are loved.

And by the grace of God, your best days are not
behind you.

They're still ahead.

Reflection Questions

1. What regret do you revisit most often?
2. How has that regret affected your relationship with God, yourself, or others?
3. What would it look like to surrender that regret completely to the Lord?

4. What truth from God's Word can replace that regret today?

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your grace and mercy. Help me release every regret I have carried. Teach me to trust You with my past and to walk confidently into the future You have prepared for me. I choose to believe Your Word above my feelings and Your promises above my memories. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Declaration

I am forgiven.

I am redeemed.

I am not defined by my past.

God's grace is greater than my mistakes.

My future is in His hands.

I am moving forward by faith.

My best days are ahead of me.

CHAPTER 2

LIVING IN THE LAND OF "IF ONLY"

There is a place many people visit far too often.

It isn't found on any map. You won't find it on a GPS. Yet millions of people spend years living there.

It's called the land of "If Only."

"If only I had chosen differently."

"If only I had listened."

"If only I had stayed."

"If only I had left."

"If only I had taken that opportunity."

"If only I had not made that mistake."

"If only..."

At first glance, those words seem harmless. After all, everyone has things they wish they could change.

But when "if only" becomes our constant companion, it quietly steals something precious from us: the present.

The enemy loves to keep people trapped between yesterday's regrets and tomorrow's fears. Why? Because a believer who is focused on either one is often ineffective today.

Think about it.

You cannot change yesterday.

And you cannot control tomorrow.

The only day you can live is today.

That is why Jesus said:

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."
(Matthew 6:34)

Jesus wasn't telling us to ignore the future. He was teaching us to trust the Father.

Many believers are waiting for God to change their circumstances while God is waiting for them to change their focus.

The enemy says:

"Look what you lost."

God says:

"Look what remains."

The enemy says:

"Look what went wrong."

God says:

"Look what I can still do."

The enemy says:

"Your best days are behind you."

God says:

"I know the thoughts that I think toward you... thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jeremiah 29:11)

One voice produces hopelessness.

The other produces faith.

Faith always looks forward.

Regret always looks backward.

That is why the enemy continually tries to pull us into the land of "if only." He knows that if he can

keep us grieving over what might have been, we may never fully embrace what still can be.

Consider Abraham.

God promised him a son.

Years passed.

Nothing happened.

Eventually Abraham and Sarah tried to "help" God fulfill His promise.

The result was Ishmael.

Was it God's perfect plan?

No.

Did God abandon Abraham because of it?

Also no.

Many believers focus on Abraham's mistake.

God focused on His promise.

That's an important lesson.

God is not looking for reasons to disqualify you.
He's looking for opportunities to fulfill His purpose in your life.

Too often we think one wrong turn has permanently ruined God's plan. But our God is a Redeemer.

Redemption means taking something broken and restoring value to it.

Redemption means God can take your mistakes and still bring beauty from them.

Redemption means your detours do not surprise Him.

Redemption means His grace is greater than your failures.

I have often said that life is rarely a straight line. Most of us take a few zigs and a few zags along the way.

Sometimes we make wise decisions.

Sometimes we don't.

Sometimes we obey immediately.

Sometimes we learn the hard way.

Yet through it all, God remains faithful.

Think about Joseph.

Years before he became governor of Egypt, he was betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused, and forgotten in prison.

How many times do you think Joseph could have said:

"If only my brothers had loved me."

"If only I hadn't been sold."

"If only Potiphar's wife hadn't lied."

"If only I hadn't spent those years in prison."

Yet Joseph understood something many people never learn.

God was working even when Joseph couldn't see it.

Years later he told his brothers:

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good..." (Genesis 50:20)

Notice what Joseph did not say.

He did not say the evil was good.

He said God brought good out of it.

There is a difference.

God does not author our mistakes.

But He is more than capable of redeeming them.

The enemy wants you staring at your scars.

God wants you seeing His faithfulness.

The enemy wants you replaying your failures.

God wants you remembering His promises.

Friend, if you've been living in the land of "if only,"
it's time to move.

The rent is too high.

The view is terrible.

And there is no future there.

God has a better place prepared for you.

It is called faith.

Faith says:

God is not finished with me.

Faith says:

My future is not determined by my past.

Faith says:

The same God who brought me this far will carry me the rest of the way.

Faith says:

Look what the Lord has done.

Reflection Questions

1. What "if only" thought visits your mind most often?
2. How has that thought affected your faith, joy, or peace?
3. What promise from God's Word speaks directly to that regret?
4. What would change if you fully believed God could redeem that part of your story?

Prayer

Father, forgive me for dwelling on things I cannot change. Help me trust You with every disappointment, every mistake, and every unanswered question. Thank You that You are the Redeemer of broken stories. Teach me to focus on Your promises rather than my regrets. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Declaration

I refuse to live in the land of "if only."

God is working all things together for my good.

My mistakes do not determine my destiny.

My future is in God's hands.

The Lord is faithful.

The Lord is good.

The Lord is not finished with me.

My best days are ahead.

Continue the Journey

The complete eBook includes:

- Conviction or Condemnation?
- Forgiven Means Forgiven
- Peter's Second Chance
- David's Restoration
- Learning to Forgive Yourself
- Stop Looking Back
- Look What the Lord Has Done
- But Look at Me Now
- 30 Days of Grace Declarations
- 30 Scriptures for Freedom from Regret
- Restoration Prayers

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Music Available On:

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Listen to songs including:

- BUT LOOK AT ME NOW
- Look What the Lord Has Done
- I Will Not Fear
- The Peace of God
- Safe in Your Faithfulness
- Shelter of the Most High

and many more faith-filled songs available on all major streaming platforms.

"By the grace of God...

look what the Lord has done."

YOUR PAST DOESN'T GET THE FINAL WORD. GRACE DOES.

Have you ever wished you could go back and change your past?

Have you replayed mistakes, regrets, painful memories, and missed opportunities, wondering what might have been?

In *But Look at Me Now*, pastor, songwriter, and author Clay Kirksey shares biblical truths that reveal how God's grace is greater than your failures, stronger than your regrets, and powerful enough to restore what once seemed lost.

Through Scripture, personal insight, reflection questions, prayers, and practical exercises, you'll discover how to:

- Break free from regret and shame
- Understand the difference between conviction and condemnation
- Receive God's forgiveness and restoration
- Renew your mind with God's Word
- Walk confidently into the future God has prepared

Your past may explain where you've been...
But it does not determine where God can take you.

BY THE GRACE OF GOD... LOOK AT ME NOW.



CLAY KIRKSEY is a pastor, songwriter, and author with more than four decades of ministry experience. Through preaching, teaching, music, and writing, he has helped countless people discover the transforming power of God's grace.

Having personally experienced God's forgiveness, restoration, and faithfulness, Clay writes with authenticity, compassion, and hope. His message is simple: no matter where you've been or what you've done, God's grace is greater than your past.

Clay is also known as the MS Music Man and has written more than 100 songs focused on faith, hope, healing, and encouragement.



*Be still
and know
that I am
God*
PSALM 46:10