(Slide #2) Introduction:

A. (►) The Past:
   1. (►) It is easy to ROMANTICIZE the past!
      a. Many do this when thinking about the past!
      b. Examples:
         1. You can idealize (sugar coat) it -- make it seem SO MUCH BETTER than it was!
         2. You can forget -- you can try to put out of your mind how BAD it was!
         3. As people age, they often talk about “the good old days!”
         4. Parents only remember the good about their children; they forget the heartache their children caused.
         5. Mates who are having problems in the present overlook the attitudes and actions that led to their present problems.
         6. When a loved one or friend dies, people ignore their sins and flaws and talk about them as if they were perfect!

   2. (►) Some MEMORALIZE the past!
      a. They honor it.
      b. They remember what blessings they had or what joy the past brought.
      c. They celebrate important dates in their own lives, in their own families, in their country, or in their religious history.

   3. (►) Some DEMORALIZE the past!
      a. They berate the good!
      b. They only remember the bad.
      c. They distort the past and make it appear to be MUCH WORSE than it really was!

B. (Slide #3) The Present:
   1. (►) Some are SUSPICIOUS of everything and everyone -- they constantly are looking for conspiracy theories in every circumstance.

   2. (►) Others are JOYOUS -- they see blessings in their lives and in the lives of others; they see good all around them.
3. (►) Some Are CALLOUS -- they do not see a reason to live; they see no good in anything!

C. (►) Dangers As We Look At The Past And The Present.
1. The past can distort or even detract from the present (I may not see the good because of past hurts or mistreatments)
2. The past can be so bad that I cannot forgive myself and find peace and forgiveness presently.
3. The past can be so bad that it is like this haunting foreboding cloud that I cannot seem to escape (I do not see reality -- the good of today.)
4. The present can be some discouraging that I totally overlook all the good that has been in my life.
5. The present can so consume my thoughts that I take no time to reflect upon the past or give consideration to the future!

D. (Slide #4) Proper Evaluation Of The Past And Present Are Really Important!

I. (Slide #5) Proper Evaluation Is Really Important In Assisting Us To Overcome The Past And To Be Productive Today!
A. Example -- Joseph!
1. If Joseph had lived in the past, he would have lived in bitterness from age 17, Gen. 37:2, until he died at age 110, Gen. 50:26!
2. Consider how Joseph could have dwelt upon the past:
   a. My brothers sold me into slavery Joseph could have bemoaned, “I was deprived of my parents in those critical late teen and early adult years!]! Gen. 37
   b. Potiphar’s wife lied about me! Gen. 39:12-20
   c. The butler forgot me! Gen. 40:23
3. Yet, this godly young man focused upon God even when he was alone in a foreign land, when he was mistreated, when he was in prison, and when he was second in power to Pharaoh himself in Egypt!
4. Everywhere he was, he served God and was focused upon glorifying God by his life!
5. And his response after his father died: “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.” Gen. 50:20

B. All Of Us Old Enough To Understand Christ’s Law And To Choose Right Or Wrong Have Disobeyed God.
   1. The question is, “How do we react as we contemplate our past sins?”

   2. When you have sinned, does the past paralyze you?
      a. Some cannot get over “I have sinned!”
      b. “I can’t believe what I did; I am so awful!”

   3. (Slide #6) When you have sinned, do you react like Judas?
      a. “I can’t forgive myself! I give up! I will just commit suicide!”
      b. And he did!
      c. Ac. 1:16-20

4. When you have sinned, do you run to Christ for mercy, grace, and forgiveness? “I am a sinner; I need Jesus!”
   a. Those who are not Christians can “repent and be baptized”! Ac. 2:38
      1. When they become believers and are baptized, they will be saved! Mk. 16:16
      2. When they repent and are baptized, they have remission of sins! Ac. 2:38
      3. And oh how blessed they are!
         a. II Cor. 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”
         b. I Jn. 5:13 “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”
   b. When Christians sin, they can have forgiveness of the stabbing guilt they feel!
      1. I Jn. 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
      2. I Jn. 1:7 “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son [cleanses us from all sin.”

II. (Slide #7) Proper Evaluation Of Our Past Is Critical To Understanding What We Need Presently!
A. It Is SO EASY For People To Revel In Their Past And To Ignore What They Desperately Need Now!
B. The Jews Put Their Trust In Their Heritage; Thus, They Totally Rejected Jesus!
   1. The Jews relished in their physical and spiritual heritage.

   2. When Israel was ready to enter Canaan, God reminded the children of those who left Egypt but died in the wilderness: “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; 8 but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” Dt. 7:7,8

   3. And He warned them: Dt. 7:9,10 “Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; 10 and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face.”

   4. But how Jews in future generations relied upon their heritage and their spiritual forefather, Abraham!
      a. John the Baptizer cautioned them: “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.” Mt. 3:8,9
      b. Yet, as a nation, they rejected Jesus by relying upon Abraham: “They answered and said to Him, ‘Abraham is our father.’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.’” Jn. 8:39
      c. Stephen scathingly denounced the Jewish people who rejected God while “resting on the laurels” of their heritage Ac. 7:51 “You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”
      d. And yet, Paul’s observation and understanding in Rom. 11:1 emphasized that God had not “written off” EVERY Jew! “I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.”

C. Those Who Commit To Christ Must Be Vitally Aware Of Their Commitment And Must Not Become Indifferent, Inactive, Or Unfaithful!
   1. Lk. 9:62 “But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’”
2. II Pet. 2:20-22 “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”

III. (Slide #8) Proper Evaluation Of Our Past And Present Is Critical As We Consider Our Giving To God!
A. Last Sunday Night, We Studied About The Completion Of The Temple. Some Amazing Statistics Were Given:
   1. The value of the gold in the Most Holy Place -- 600 talents of gold (A talent was about 80 pounds; today an ounce of gold is worth $1,321.61. 600 talents would be 48,000 pounds or 24 tons. The value today of the gold in the Most Holy Place was over $1 billion! $1,014,996,480!)
   2. The total amount of gold used in the Temple was 100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 talents of silver plus bronze and iron that could not be measured! II Chr. 3:8,9
      a. (A talent was about 80 pounds; today an ounce of gold is worth $1,321.61. 100,000 talents would be 8,000,000 pounds or 4,000,000 tons. The value today of the gold in the Temple would be over $169 billion!! $169,166,080,000,)
      b. (A talent was about 80 pounds; today an ounce of silver is worth $17.31. 1,000,000 talents of silver would be 80,000,000 pounds or 40,000,000 tons. The value today of the silver in the Temple would be over $22 billion! $22,156,800,000.
      c. Keep in mind this does not include the bronze and iron!
   3. One other interesting number -- Solomon had as a part of his yearly budget 666 talents of gold! I Ki. 10:14 (That is over $1.1 billion just in gold in his yearly spending! $1,126,646,092.80!)
   4. And yet, Isaiah told Hezekiah: “‘Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,’ says the LORD.” Is. 39:6
   5. They went from lavishing in riches to having NOTHING!
B. Paul Knew What It Was Like To Have Abundance Of Blessings And To Be In Abject Poverty!
1. He had a career and was very successful.
2. He was imprisoned and had nothing!
3. Phil. 4:11,12 “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”

C. (Slide #9) We Must Be Very Aware Of Our Blessings NOW!
1. (►) Make sure you evaluate your blessings today, not how bad you had in the past (2008).
2. (►) Make sure your giving considers your blessings and gives accordingly (as you have prospered)! I Cor. 16:2 “in keeping with his income” NIV
3. (►) Make sure your giving shows gratitude!
4. (Slide #10) Make sure if your blessings have become abundant that you do not give as when you were struggling!
5. (►) Make sure that you do not ROB God! Mal. 3:8,9 “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation.”
6. (►) Make sure that you use great wisdom with your blessings -- GIVE, SAVE, LIVE!