

A photograph of a person from the waist down, wearing a dark jacket and jeans, holding a brown leather bag. They are standing on a dirt path that leads into a blurred landscape of green fields and trees under a bright sky. The text "YOUR PAST" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters.

YOUR
PAST


- Numbers 32:23 points out that sin always catches up to us. No matter how clever we are or how well we cover our tracks, at the very least God always knows (Ecc. 12:14).
- Instead of facing our mistakes, we try to run from them. We use tricky, evasive language, keep things vague, fabricate justification, and attempt to overcompensate. One wonders what was going through Moses' head when he ran away (Ex. 2:11-15).



RUNNING FROM YOUR PAST

- Given the incredible damage he had done, it's not surprising that Saul of Tarsus was met with skepticism and fear (Acts 9:26). His own humility, coupled with the boldness of Barnabas, made it possible for him to become a source of joy in the church (Acts 9:27-28, 11:24-26, Gal. 1:22-24).
- The past is what it is. Nobody else will learn to get over your mistakes until you do. Turn around and face them!



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- A person's hand is visible, holding a thick, yellowish-brown book, likely a Bible, against a blurred background of a path and trees. The person is wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants.
- Our past has molded us to be what we are today. While Paul regretted many of the things he did, he did not regret the way he was shaped by his experiences (Acts 26:2-23, Phil. 3:6-8, 1 Tim. 1:12-16).
 - Rather than always seeing our past as “baggage” or an “anchor”, we should see it as useful data. When we fail, we have an opportunity to learn from mistakes. This equips us for success later. Just like in science, even failure is a useful result— as long as we learn something from it.

EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE

(Model.)

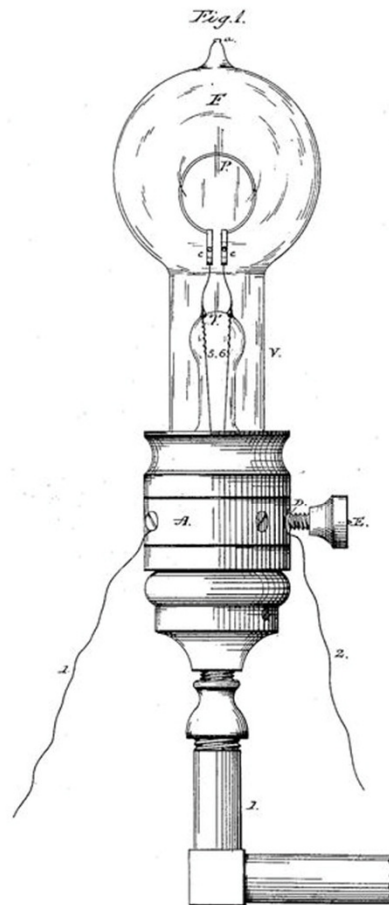
2 Sheets—Sheet 1.

T. A. EDISON.

ELECTRIC LAMP AND HOLDER FOR THE SAME.

No. 265,311.

Patented Oct. 3, 1882.



Attest
J. H. Edwards
James W. Rogers

Inventor:

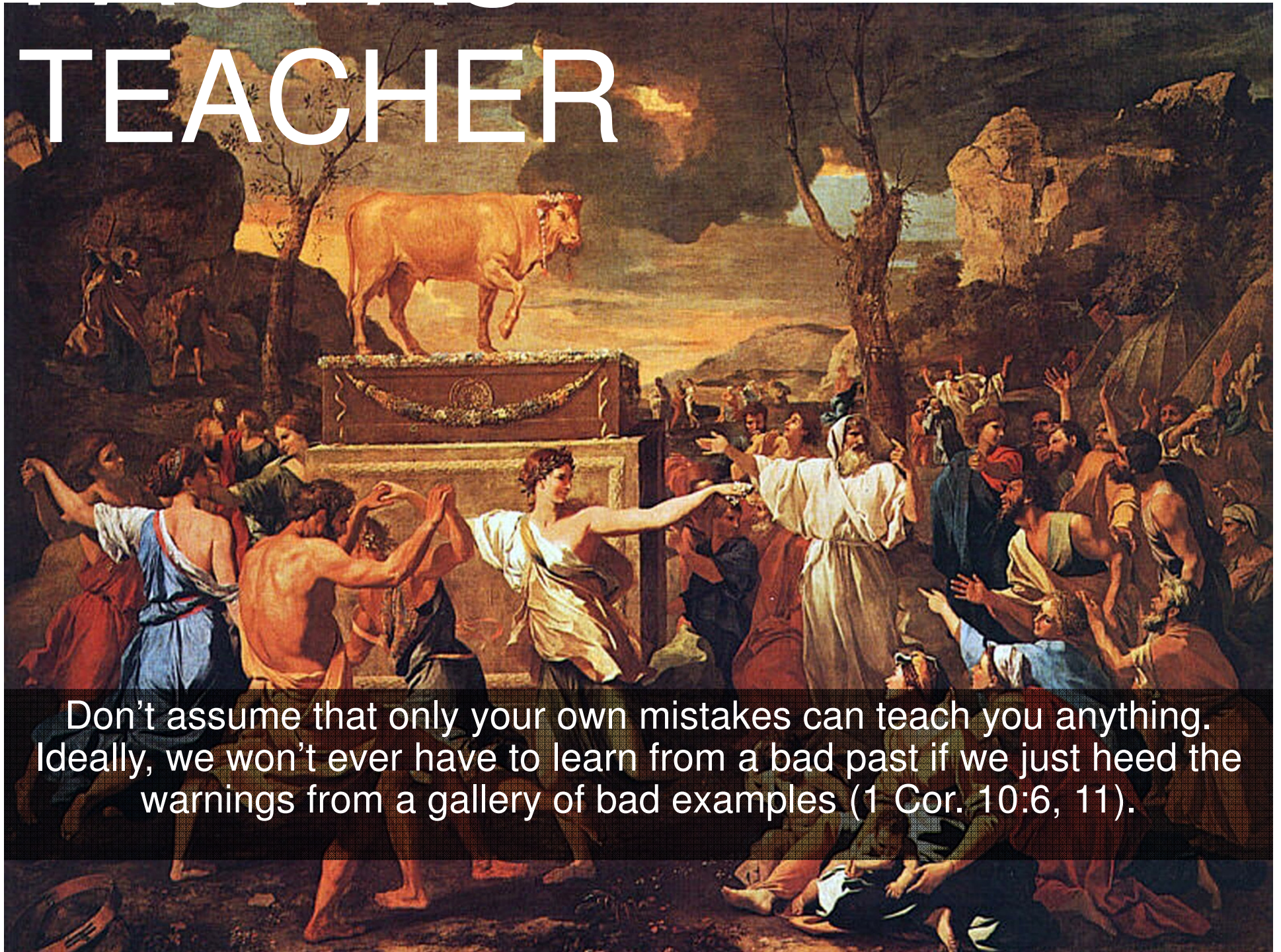
J. H. Edison per
Dyson & Wilson
his attys

N. PETERS, Photo-Lithographer, Washington, D. C.


"I speak without exaggeration when I say that I have constructed three thousand different theories in connection with the electric light, each one of them reasonable and apparently to be true. Yet only in two cases did my experiments prove the truth of my theory. My chief difficulty, as perhaps you know, was in constructing the carbon filament, the incandescence of which is the source of the light. Every quarter of the globe was ransacked by my agents, and all sorts of the queerest materials were used, until finally the shred of bamboo now utilized was settled upon. Even now,' Mr. Edison continued, 'I am still at work nearly every day on the lamp.'"

Thomas Edison, *Harper's Monthly Magazine*
1890


TEACHER



Don't assume that only your own mistakes can teach you anything. Ideally, we won't ever have to learn from a bad past if we just heed the warnings from a gallery of bad examples (1 Cor. 10:6, 11).

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- The past is not always seen in a negative light. For some people, the past is full of their best days, their accomplishments, their youth and vigor – in a word, their glory.
 - In a sense, any infatuation with the past (whether regret or longing) leaves us twisted and unhappy. Notice Ecclesiastes 7:10.
 - The elderly in Jerusalem had a hard time appreciating their progress because the new temple was more modest than the first (Ezra 3:11-13, Haggai 2:3).

YOUR GLORY DAYS

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- A person's hand is visible, holding a thick, yellowish-brown Bible. The person is wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with a path and trees.
- Don't be so enthralled by your past that you forget the incredible blessings of “now” – such as trading youth for distinction (Prov. 20:29), chaos for order, foolishness for wisdom (Prov. 23:22-23), or “adventure” for routine.
 - The hidden treasure of a satisfying life in Christ looks very different from the earthly glory we covet. Paul had to leave success behind (Gal. 1:13-14), but he counted it as rubbish (Phil. 3:7-8).

YOUR GLORY DAYS

“WE USED TO FILL THIS BUILDING”

- Just like individuals, churches can also suffer from an obsession with their past. Certainly, some things are out of our control (economy, demographics, etc.), but is it possible we shoot our future in the foot by looking backward?
- Remember Sardis (Rev. 3:1-3)
- We must strive to be a flexible congregation that accepts today's reality, or else, one of these days, we will be sitting in a half-empty auditorium wondering what went wrong with the world.