

Forgetting the Past, Philippians 3:12-16 – February 3rd, 2019

- I want to talk to you today about something that I believe can be one of the most destructive dynamics in the life of a Christian.
- Specifically, that of our past and the guilt and condemnation the enemy packages with it to distance a Christian from the Lord.
- This because, Satan seeks to crush us under the weight of our past in order to succeed in stealing, killing and destroying us.

John 10:10 - The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

- If there was ever a man who could speak to the propensity for ones past to utterly destroy the present and future, it was Paul.
- Don't think for a moment that the Devil didn't continually remind Paul of what he used to be when he had Christians murdered.
- I'm believe it was his approval of Stephen's murder, the first martyr of the early church that the enemy tried to haunt Paul with.

Acts 7:54–8:3 - 54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. 1 And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. 3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

- The question becomes one of how Paul was able to forget his past and perhaps more importantly, how we are able to forget.
- Enter our text today, where the Apostle Paul rises from the pages of our Bibles as an example to us of how we too can do this.
- What follows are two very practical ways we as Christians can forget the past and stop living in the past in our walk with Christ.

1. Press on (Verses 12-14)

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

- What Paul is saying here is that admittedly, he himself has not arrived or attained to that which Christ had taken hold of him for.
- Namely, the goal of winning the prize for which God has called him heavenward in Christ Jesus, which is why he presses on.
- It seems Paul is employing the sports metaphor of running a race knowing if he looks behind him, he will not finish or finish well.

Luke 9:62 - Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

- What Jesus is saying is that we are unfit to be His servants if and when we are always looking back instead of plowing forward.
- Even dwelling on the good things in the past have the potential to cripple us by virtue of how we can become puffed up in pride.
- In other words, our past victories can make us proud and arrogant and our past sins can paralyze us in guilt and condemnation.

2. Think Differently (Verses 15-16)

15 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

- It's interesting to note Paul would refer to growing in grace and maturing in Christ changes us to the point of thinking differently.
- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the best ways to forget the past, having the mind of Christ would have to be it.
- It's for this reason the pages of scripture are replete with passage after passage, promise after promise, concerning the mind.

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 - 3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Romans 12:1–2 - 1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- I am keenly aware that I would be grossly remiss were I not to address the matter of being deeply hurt by someone in the past.
- To some degree every single one of us has been on the receiving end of some form of abuse, or betrayal, by someone else.
- It's not what's been done to me in the past it's what's been done for me in the past, namely Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.