

February 23, 2020

Finding Peace in a Troubled World

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection of the dead."

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have been made perfect, but I PRESS ON to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, 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 I PRESS ON toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:7-14

In our study of the Apostle Paul's letter to his dear friends in Philippi we have discovered that he is, through this letter, showing us the path that leads to lives of joy and peace regardless of circumstances. In the first chapter of his letter the Apostle shows us the importance of finding our God-designed purpose and the need to pursue that purpose with passion. In the second chapter Paul will show us the importance of living a poured-out life.

In our context for today from the third chapter of this letter the Apostle shows us the importance of leaving the past behind as we PRESS ON toward the goal of heaven. All of us, without exception, carry the scars of things in our past. All of us have been hurt, all of us have known loss and pain, all of us have fallen and fallen again.



Not one of us gets through this life unscathed. Most of us have been advised more than once by those who care about us to forgive and forget the past. Just to be clear; all of us are capable of forgiving and giving up our desire for retribution, but sadly, not one of us is really capable of forgetting the past. The more damaging any event or failure or injury has been the more impossible it is for us to forget that event or failure or injury. Pain lays down memory tracks in our brains that really never fully heal and certainly never really fade.

Without exception you and I can be pulled back to those old experiences and be haunted again by those old ghosts. So, when the Apostle tells us that he is "...***forgetting what lies behind...***" he is really not saying that he has done that.

What? Wait? How do I know this. Begin reading at the beginning of the chapter and you will find Paul recounting all that he was and has lost for the sake of his faith. In other places he lists the many horrible things he has endured in his ministry. He has forgotten nothing.

So what does he mean when he writes, "...***forgetting what lies behind...***" I am convinced that he is reminding us that we have the power to choose where we dwell. I can choose to dwell in my past and to walk through those old times over and over again. Every day, over and over again, Satan will find a way to tweak those old memories luring me to walk again into my past.

The Apostle is showing us that overcoming this temptation to return to the past which is so, so common for each of us, is really a matter of focus. I can choose to focus on my past, to retell and to relive those old experiences, to feel again those old hurts or I can choose to focus on the goal that is out in front of me. But make no mistake, I must actively choose, and sometimes choose again and again.

Why is this such a struggle for us? We struggle because we have been literally scared by life. Those old pain-filled memories are very real and they cannot be denied or ignored. We are, in

no small part, the product of those experiences. And Satan knows that tempting us to focus on those things from our past, to look backwards and not forwards, will keep us stuck in that past and make us useless. Focusing on the past will steal our passion and our purpose. Focusing on the past will lead us to focus on ourselves and on ourselves alone.

So, the Apostle will show us that putting all of our energy into forward motion toward the goal that really matters is the only way to really leave the past behind. When we acknowledge our past; when we forgive those who have hurt us; when we give up our thirst for retribution; when we focus all of our energies and all of our attention on forward motion toward the goal of eternity then we can and will discover the lives of peace and joy that God calls us to live.

*press on toward the goal
to win the prize*

PHIL 3:14

