

LEAVING BEHIND, PRESSING FORWARD

Philippians 3:12-14

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Paul wrote the book of Philippians in AD 61 amongst one theme of Cordial affection and appreciation for the congregation. The four chapters present varied sub themes. But at chapter three, it showed Paul's reflection on his own life. it is against this backdrop of one of his statements that exhortation for today is drawn.

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have [b]apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. VV 12 – 14.

The passage tells us one thing that Paul does: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward. Paul statement has several facets. It involves all aspects of his life: The present life he is living, the past life he had led and the future life he would live. He was determine and focused to live a life on knowing Christ. This is surely to what Christ spoke to disciple in his prayer: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" {John 17:3

This passage should equally be the primary focus of our Christian lives. True to it, good decisions and policies are made in the present from the short falls of the past and to forecast, project or see the future to go. When Paul made the statement in **2 Timothy 4:7-8** "7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." Paul took note of his past life and admitted severally to have lived in ignorance of the will of God , then submitted that in the present , he lives for Christ in all things "**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Consequently, we want to learn and admonish ourselves from the attitude of Apostle Paul as noted in the above passage.

(1) Regarding the Present: Humility is greatly needed

Earlier in this book of Philippians, Paul had written of his life as a Jew and how he has given up everything for the Lord because he has not attained and could not claim perfection. Yet Paul was one of the greatest men in the New Testament, if not next to Christ. We can judge him by his works and suffering for Christ. Therefore, we cannot feel perfect as it were if Paul did not.

To lead a focus life, we need a realistic view of where we are spiritually. How far we have come and how far we still need to go. This is 2023, and it should not be as 2022. We are to keep growing spiritually until we die; **Eph. 4:15** *“but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—”*.

2 Pet. 3:18 *“but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and ever, Amen.”*

When a tree stops growing, it is dead. God intends for us to grow physically and mentally. When we are born again. **John 3:3,5** *“3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born [a]gain, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”* God wants us to grow spiritually.

There is always more to learn, always more to do and always additional growth to attain. For example, I am not good in songs therefore you are not there to practice or learn how to sing, indicates that you have attained. Irrespective of your tiredness and schedule we should make a date with all church programmed activities. Regarding the presence, we need humility to move on regularly.

(2) Regarding the Past: Forgiveness is needed

Paul coped with the fact that he was not all that he should be spiritually. From the key passage, he dealt with the anomaly *“forgetting what lies behind”*.

Paul did not forget his knowledge of the word of God; how he was saved by grace neither did he forget everything life had taught him. He forgets his past successes (**vv 4 – 8**), yet he has not attained but pressing on or forward. The danger of being satisfied with the past of our blessed successes is possible thereby making us stay aloof or complacent in the services of God. We could have a name (reputation) like the Sardis Church as a congregation which was diagnosed dead by Christ - **Rev. 3:1**.

Paul also forgot his failures so that he can move on. He has not obtained or attained and that he is not perfect. He didn't reminisce or keep his past keep regretting his past.

After he repented, he put trust in God's mercy and moved on. We shouldn't let our frailties of the past haunt us but pray for forgiveness and strength to keep up for this year; lay aside anything that might weigh you down. (**Heb. 12:1**) Our focus should therefore be on what is ahead for us as Paul did. In other words, Paul focused on the future.

(3) **Regarding the future: progress is needed!**

When you think about the past so much, you become distracted or get discouraged. This was not with Paul. He forgets the past and press forward for the best (he did it with ceaseless exertion)

Progressing spiritual life can be measured by your maturity in Christ affairs, the way you relate in the things of God become your aim is that prize which Paul keep pressing forward to. He referred to the price as upward call of God.

God calls us by the gospel (**2 Thess. 2:14**) and invites us to live in heaven with him **Rev. 21:3-4** *"3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

We need to set our minds on the heavenly goal **Col. 2:12**, *"12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."* **Col. 3:1** *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God."*

We cannot live in the old way of wickedness, forsaking all programmed church activities and keep same this year. The goal is not attained in that way my brethren. We all need drastic clinical touch to our faith in Christ this year.

Leaving behind can be filled with miss giving or with thanksgiving. Anyway, God must be thanked always pressing forward can be with cowardice or confidence but let us have coincidence in God always.

We can look at the future with fear or with prayer, let us be prayerful with up and doing for God, we can rely on our own strength, or we can rely on God and Christ, but let us look unto Christ and rely on God. Our unhappiness and happiness regardless of what happens is depended on God and yourself but let us allow the happiness from God overwhelm us. Finally, the focus of life needed by Paul should also be our focus in life.

May God bless his word in us.