

Getting Past the Past

People, especially older people, often like to reminisce about the “good old days” when life was slower, simpler and far less stressful. In doing so, they tend to discredit the advances, conveniences and benefits of the present in favor of the more antiquated and less complex ways of the past. In today’s Templates of Truth, Paul urges us to forget the past, seize the present, and move forward with intent & confidence for a bright & hopeful future.

In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul emphatically stated – *one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead* (Philippians 3:13). The word Paul used that is translated *forgetting* means to lose out of mind. Someone has said, “people bury the past, but they walk away remembering where the grave is.” That is not the idea Paul is conveying here. He is talking about an act of the will where we totally put out of our mind certain things of the past (when you lose something, it is gone). What things? What things of the past would Paul urge us to put out of our mind in order to effectively reach forward to all the hopes and potential of the future?

The Victimized Past – All of us have past experiences that have left us feeling victimized. Someone betrayed our trust and hurt us deeply. Someone attacked our character and bruised our ego. Someone spread a vicious lie about us and damaged our reputation. Someone rejected us and shattered our self-esteem. We may have suffered significant loss as the result of a missed opportunity. Many of us know the devastation of a lost job and secure income. Whatever it was, we suffered a painful assault as the result of something we neither orchestrated nor felt any control over. We were victimized. Paul would say to us that we need not allow these things to paralyze our self-worth and willingness to trust again or try again. Neither should we allow those experiences to give us a martyr complex, where we resign ourselves to a suffering state for the sake of another’s favored gain. Too many people dwell in a victimized past.

The Villainous Past – Many of us wallow in the shame & guilt of past faults and failures. We messed up, took a wrong turn, made bad choices, and now we are living with the consequences of those failures. We offended someone, slandered someone, took advantage of someone or cheated someone out of something important to them because we wanted it for our own selfish satisfaction. Many have suffered marriage failure, job failure, or financial failure. Others were immoral, unethical, criminal or in some other way delinquent in their actions and behaviors, and now are paralyzed in the regret of choices that have left their life deficit & disqualified from the way things could have otherwise been. Paul would remind us that genuine confession & repentance produces the abundant grace of God’s total and complete forgiveness. Since God remembers our sin no longer (Isaiah 43:25), Paul shouts that we should put it out of our heads as well. Too many people dwell in their villainous past.

The Victorious Past – Noting this kind of past might be a surprise to some, but many people make the successes of the present dependent on the successes of the past. They assume that

since something work so well and paid off so generously in the past, it is guaranteed to do so now or in the future. They tend to reject change and innovation in favor of tried, tested and proven means of former effectiveness. As history proves, that is not always a predictable track. While certainly not discouraging their celebration, Paul would caution us about placing too much confidence in the victories of our past. We cannot gloat and become complacent in the securities of our past triumphs. Especially in the spiritual realm, we cannot trust the faith maturity of yesteryear to sustain us without continued growth in our spiritual vitality in the present and beyond. We must diligently strive to see consistent growth in our personal walk with God. Too many people bask in the glory of past victory.

For some, the victimized assaults or villainous escapades of the past occurred many, many years ago. For all those years, these have remained encumbered by bitterness, resentment, anger and deep-seated hurt & regret. It has left them feeling unworthy, undeserving and useless to God and His Kingdom. It does not have to be just the defeats of Satan in our present life that disables us from God's service. It is often the past defeats that keep us paralyzed in the trenches of uselessness. Either way, Satan still has the victory. Paul says it is time to put the past behind and *press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 3:14). The problem with the "good old days" is that not everything about them was "good!" What we have now is in many ways better and what God has awaiting us is the very best. Don't you think it is high time to get past your past?

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.