

Finding Joy in the Past, Present and Future

Finding Joy in Hard Times

Phil. 3:12-16 November 11, 2018

Paul looks at his life from three angles: his past, present and future. HOW he looks at each of these is very important!

DAY 1: Evaluation: Face your faults. The present and past.

Philippians 3:12 **Not** that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

1. "I should be farther along in my spiritual growth than I am." Notice how Paul freely acknowledges that he is not farther along.

2. Are you surprised by how slow the process takes? Does it often seem like it is a few steps forward and a few steps back?

3. Real spiritual growth is humbling. But it's also realistic.

4. Spiritual maturity begins with being honest with yourself about your need to grow.

Matthew 7:4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? [5] You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

5. What is Jesus telling us to do?

6. The slow way to grow is to not involve others in your life as examples, mentors, and people to hold you accountable.

7. In the verses below, jot down the benefits of having other people play roles in your growth:

Proverbs 9:8 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. (9) Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser. Teach a righteous man and he will increase in learning.

Ecclesiastes 4:13 Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer takes advice.

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men will become wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

An honest assessment is not a call to be discouraged. It's a call to press on!

DAY 2: Elimination: Frame your failures. The past.

Phil. 3:13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind...

1. I've heard bible teachers take this verse and say you should never look back at your failures, your sins, and you should have no regrets. It's as if they want you to put up a 12 foot high wall up on your past so that you never think about your past.

2. Is that your view of looking at your past? How would you describe your view of looking at your past?

3. Though some current and popular bible teachers tell you to "forget" your past, that's not what the prophets, biblical writers, Jesus or Peter recommended! Again and again, we are reminded of our past, especially with a view toward not repeating it!

4. So then, what does Paul mean when he says "Forgetting what is behind...?" What do you think he means?

5. There is a difference between using your past as the hammer of shame, **or** thinking of your past as a tool in our Redeemer's hand to humble you, teach you, and motivate you not to act as you once did. Proverbs calls this "hatred of sin." It's a mark of maturity!

6. Have you used your past as a hammer of shame? If so, how do you want to think about your past differently?

7. Has remembering your past built in you a greater hatred of sin?

DAY 4: Concentration: Focus on the present with an eye on the future (continued)

1. We continue unpacking the same verses from yesterday.

*Philippians. 3:13-14 But one thing I do: ... **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.*

2. Let's look at how Paul sees his future.

3. What is it for which Paul is straining?

4. What is "the goal?"

5. What is the "prize?"

6. Let's look at four particulars, two today, and two tomorrow. The potential future for every Christian involves the following:

- **A crown.**

2 Tim. 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

7. How would this motivate Paul? You?

- **Commendation.**

Matthew 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

8. How would this motivate Paul? You?

DAY 5: Concentration: Focus on the present with an eye on the future (continued)

*Philippians. 3:13-14 But one thing I do: ... **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.*

1. We'll look at two other future items for the Christian that can motivate you to keep walking the narrow road of life, even when the present gets extremely difficult.

- **Contentment**. Please God.

2 Cor. 5:9 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

2. Perhaps when you were young you wanted to please your dad or mom. Maybe you wanted to please a particular coach, a teacher, or someone at church. How did that motivate you toward good behavior, or focused behavior?

3. Sometimes, trying to please someone can turn out very discouraging. You can work your brains out to please the people in your life and it is just not enough.

4. But with the Lord, He is pleased with even the smallest effort, sometimes, with even the smallest of intention! How would pleasing the Lord differ from trying to please people?

- **Christ**. See his face.

Acts 2:28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

5. One day, we will see Christ face-to-face! When we see the scars in his hands and feet we will immediately realize that every sacrifice we ever made for someone else was worth it.

6. Paul says he is "straining ... to win the prize." The image is of a marathon runner, approaching the finish line, with a competitor running right with him. Paul also uses this same analogy in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

7. What strikes you about this image of running, straining toward the finish line? How does this apply to your approach to serving Him?