

**Keep Your Eyes on the Prize:
Are you in the game?
Philippians 3:12-21
January 1, 2017**

Leave the past in the past.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. **Philippians 3:13**

Paul had a pretty sketchy past. Remember, he was a Christian killer.

His past, however, he was proud of before his conversion. (Phil 3:5-7)

One side of the ledger he saw as a **credit** (confidence in the flesh), the other side of the ledger he considered a **debit** (hated Jesus and the things of Jesus).

When Paul met Christ, though his bookkeeping switched, his credits became his debts and his debts became his credits. What Paul thought was right was actually wrong.

When we are living the way we think is right or ok, we must seek to see if it lines up with God's Word.

Your past does not **define** you. While there are consequences for our past, our past doesn't have to define who we are nor our direction in our life.

This morning, I encourage you to leave your past at the foot of the Cross. Be it positive and encouraging, leave it at the Cross thanking God. Be it negative and with regrets, leave it not to pick it up again.

Live purposely in the present.

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. **Philippians 3:12**

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 3:14**

Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.

What motivates you? What should motivate you?

Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your mind and all of your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:36-40)

A Christian's life purpose should be what Scripture spells out for us, to love Jesus with all we have and to love others. It is not a one-time decision kind of thing, but day by day.

Paul's conversion was not just an experience of a moment. Conversion is not a balloon ascension. A great many people think that you can go down to some altar and have an experience, see a vision, and be carried to the heights-- and that's it. Oh, my friend, conversion is something that stays with you. It is not for just a moment. Although it happens in a moment of time, it continues for a lifetime. And sanctification is not a great emotional experience; it is a daily walk in dependence upon God. ~ **J. Vernon McGee**

We know from verses 12 and 14 Paul was in the race, are you? Jesus has won the race for us, but we must receive the Prize. We must receive Salvation. Once we have received it, we can spend the rest of this life learning, walking, growing and serving Him.

If Christ Jesus has taken hold of me (vs.13) then I want to take hold of Jesus Himself.

Now, the immediate result of that grasp, when it is yielded to, is the sense of the removal of guilt, forgiveness of sins, acceptance with God. But these, the immediate results, are by no means the whole results, although a great many of us live as if we thought that the only thing that Christianity is meant to do to us is that it bars the gates of some future hell, and brings to us the message of forgiveness. We cannot think too nobly or too loftily of that gift of forgiveness, the initial gift that is laid in every Christian man's hands, but we may think too exclusively of it, and a great many of us do think of it as if it were all that was to be given. A painter has to clear away the old paint off a door, or a wall, before he lays on the new. The initial gift that comes from being laid hold of by Jesus Christ is the burning off of the old coat of paint. But that is only the preliminary to the laying on of the new. A man away in the backwoods will spend a couple of years after he has got his bit of land in felling and burning the trees, and rooting out and destroying the weeds. But is that what he got the clearing for? That is only a preliminary to sowing the seed. My friend! If Jesus Christ has laid hold of you, and you have let Him keep hold of you, it is not only that you may be forgiven, not only that you may sun yourself in the light of God's countenance, and feel that a new blessed relation is set up between you and Him, but there are great purposes lying at the back of that, of which all that is only the preliminary and the preparation.

Conversion. Yes; but what is the good of turning a man round unless he goes in the direction in which his face is turned? And so here the Apostle having for years lived in the light of that great thought, that God was reconciled in Jesus Christ, and that he was God's friend, discerns far beyond that, in dim perspective, towering high above the land in the front, the snowy sunlit summits of a great range to which he has yet to climb, and says, 'I press on to lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Jesus Christ.'¹

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Psalm 34:8

The Christian life was never meant to be in neutral, but in drive and not reverse.

For the growing Christian life, **discipleship** is key!

Hope for the future.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Philippians 3:20-21

Earth is preparing us for eternity with the King.

This is not all there is, it was never meant to be. For the atheist, unbeliever and lost person this is as good as it gets.

Pray for the lost, share with the lost, weep over the lost!

Prayer Focus:

Acknowledge your past and lay it at the cross. Be reminded it is not who you are!

Focus your eyes on the Lord today and every day. Ask Him to give you His focus.

Look forward to the future.

¹ MacLaren's Exposition