

The Enemy of Your Past

One of the most often rehearsed quotes from the lips of the apostle Paul can be found in Philippians 3:13-14. After listing all the things he has been through—both good and bad—he reaffirms his intention to continue to pursue Christ by saying:

When we consider this text, we usually think about Paul's exclusive focus ("this one thing I do"). We are inspired by someone who is following, reaching, and pressing toward the finish line despite life's challenges. However, in the examination of the text we often fail to consider the imperative word that makes his strivings possible; it is the word *forgetting*. Paul was a deliberate and intentional forgetter.

One of the things that keeps so many people from going forward is their unwillingness to forget or set aside things from their past. Many are unwilling to forget their prosperity, position, and possessions in order to fully follow Christ.

We also have to learn to be willing to forget our pains and problems. Many Christians cannot go forward in their walk with Christ until they are willing to lay aside some hurt, offense or problem. The result is a heart that is not focused on Christ, a spirit unable to pursue right things, and an attitude that lacks grace and peace.

Two thoughts about the importance of going forward and overcoming the offenses and hurts of the past.

1. Looking Back Encourages the Possibility of Going Back

When it comes to offenses one of the best things we can do to overcome them is to stop rehearsing the hurt in our ears and our heart. When we do this we begin to justify our bitterness toward the other person. This keeps us from focusing on forgiveness, grace, and the fact that we have often been guilty of the same failings.

Looking back keeps us from looking to God for help and the potential of considering our offender in a better light. If our eyes and heart are turned in the wrong direction and we don't become deliberate forgetters, we then give place to the devil to spoil our spirit and we allow him to keep us in a cage of our own making.

Forgiving and forgetting are keys to true freedom in the Christian life. It is sometimes best to forget what is behind you so that it has no opportunity to overtake you again.

2. There Is Much to Be Gained and Learned by Forgetting

Paul pressed forward for a prize. To him there was something greater to be gained by moving ahead and not lingering in the past. That is true for us in terms of offense as well. There is simply nothing to be gained by going back to past hurts and refusing to get over them. However, by forgiving and pressing forward, we gain a greater Christ-likeness. We gain strength, maturity, understanding, and patience. We grow in wisdom and faith and give both our offenders and ourselves the opportunity to learn from the past and be better in the future.

There are many reasons we should forget the past and go forward. Chief among them is the reward of knowing we have done what is right.