**Sunday Morning Series: “Moving Forward: Leaving the Past Behind”**

**Isaiah 43:18-19** – *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”*

**The Call to Let Go**

Letting go of the past—failures, regrets, and even successes—in order to pursue God’s purpose and future.

**Philippians 3:13–14**

*“Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

**Introduction**

* The past is powerful—it can shape us, teach us, but if we hold on too tightly, it can also **trap us.**
* People often live in one of two modes:
	1. **Chained to the past** – haunted by guilt, shame, and “what ifs.”
	2. **Camped in the past** – satisfied with yesterday’s victories and refusing to move forward.
* Paul’s challenge is both **liberating** and **motivating**: “Forget what’s behind. Press toward what’s ahead.”

**I. THE PAST CAN BECOME A CHAIN**

* Many believers live with **spiritual baggage** that weighs them down.

**🔹 Common struggles that keep us stuck:**

* **Failures – guilt, shame**
 • The enemy loves to whisper, “Remember what you did? You’ll never change.”
* **Hurts – bitterness, unforgiveness**
 • Old wounds, unresolved pain, and grudges keep our hearts heavy.
* **Successes – pride, complacency**
 • Even victories can trap us when we start thinking we’ve “done enough” for God.

**Truth:** You can’t fully embrace what God has for you **today** if you’re chained to what happened **yesterday.**

**II. LOOKING BACK WILL SLOW YOU DOWN**

* Illustration: A runner looking over their shoulder slows, stumbles, or loses focus.
* **True story:** A runner celebrated too early, throwing up his hands before the finish line—another runner sprinted past him.
* **Application:** If we spend life looking backward—whether in regret or nostalgia—we risk missing the finish line God has for us.

**Hebrews 12:1** – “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race set before us.”

**III. PAUL’S STRATEGY FOR MOVING FORWARD**

* Paul says, *“I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it yet…”* (Phil. 3:13) – He admits he hasn’t arrived.
* His focus: **“Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what’s ahead.”**

**Key thought:** Paul didn’t live in denial about his past—he simply **refused to be defined by it.**

**IV. THREE KEY TRUTHS FROM PHILIPPIANS 3:13–14**

1. **Let go of past failures and hurts**
2. **Let go of past successes and achievements**
3. **Press on toward God’s call and future**

**V. PURPOSE AND CHALLENGE**

* Stop letting the past—good or bad—control you.
* Embrace God’s purpose for today and run toward His future for your life.

**SECTION ONE: LET GO OF PAST FAILURES AND HURTS**

**🔹 The Weight of the Past Can Drag Us Down**

* Failures, sins, and wounds become **anchors**—holding us in place.
* Many of us **replay mistakes** and **relive pain** long after Christ has forgiven us.

**🔹 What Does It Mean to “Forget” (Philippians 3:13)?**

* **Not** amnesia—Paul didn’t erase his past.
* It means:
 ✔ **Stop giving it focus.**
 ✔ **Stop letting it control your present.**

**🔹 Paul’s Example of Freedom**

* Paul’s past: He persecuted Christians (Acts 8–9).
* He could have been **paralyzed by guilt**.
* Instead, he **accepted Christ’s forgiveness** and moved forward.

**Truth:** If God’s grace covered Paul, it can cover you too.

**🔹 Healing from Hurts**

* Past wounds inflicted by others can chain us to **bitterness.**
* **Ephesians 4:31-32** – “Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger… Be kind and compassionate… forgiving one another.”
* Forgiveness isn’t saying the hurt didn’t matter—it’s saying it **won’t control me anymore.**

**🔹 Personal Failures Do Not Define You**

* Failed relationship? Moral failure? Regret?
* **Isaiah 1:18** – “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

**Bottom line:** Don’t carry chains Jesus already unlocked.

**SECTION TWO: LET GO OF PAST SUCCESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

**🔹 The Surprising Danger of Success**

* Past victories can lead to:
 ✔ **Complacency** (“I’ve done enough.”)
 ✔ **Pride** (“Look what I did.”)
 ✔ **Nostalgia** (“The good old days were better.”)

**🔹 Paul’s Choice**

* Philippians 3:7–8 – Paul considered his achievements “garbage” compared to knowing Christ.
* Why? Because yesterday’s victories don’t replace today’s pursuit.

**🔹 A Warning to Seasoned Believers**

* No retirement in the Kingdom of God—if you’re alive, you’re still called.
* **Isaiah 43:18–19** – “Forget the former things… I am doing a new thing!”

**🔹 Truth: Celebrate the past but don’t camp there.**

* Jesus said, *“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”* (Luke 9:62)

**SECTION THREE: PRESS ON TOWARD GOD’S CALL AND FUTURE**

**🔹 Paul’s Language is Active**

* “Straining forward… pressing on…” – Like a runner **leaning** into the finish tape.
* Christian life isn’t a **casual stroll**—it’s a **passionate pursuit.**

**🔹 What’s the Prize?**

* Paul calls it “the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
* The **ultimate reward**: Knowing Jesus fully now & being with Him forever.

**🔹 Pressing On Means Perseverance**

* There will be resistance—fear, fatigue, and distractions.
* **Philippians 4:13** – “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”

**🔹 Pressing On Means Forward Focus**

* **Hebrews 12:2** – “Fix your eyes on Jesus.”
* Our bodies—and our lives—move in the direction of our **eyes.**

**🔹 Pressing On Means Embracing God’s New Purpose**

* When you release what’s behind, you create space for what’s ahead.
* God may be calling you to:
 ✔ A new ministry
 ✔ Reconciliation
 ✔ Deeper devotion
 ✔ Greater faith

**TAKEAWAYS**

* **Your past doesn’t define you—God does.**
* **Don’t drag the chains Jesus broke.**
* **Honor the past but live for what’s ahead.**
* **Best days are still ahead—if you keep your eyes on Jesus.**

**MEMORY VERSE**

*Philippians 3:13–14 – “Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. What past failures or hurts am I still holding onto?
2. Have past successes made me complacent?
3. Where is God calling me to **press on** today?