

There Ain't No Future in the Past

By Evelyn Timmons

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We read in Philippians 3:13-14, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

I think that Paul probably more than any other writer of the New Testament understood the effect that our past can have on us. Paul seemed to understand the importance of the past, the present and the future. If you can understand the importance of each and how to put them in proper perspective you can walk in a level of freedom that many people never reach. With the world in the turmoil it is in and the return of the Lord drawing near it is especially important that we understand these things.

We are a three part being spirit, soul and body and we are perfected or matured on three time tables – past, present and future. As we walk through this life we have an obligation to each phase of our life. (1) We are to learn from the past (2) We are to work in the present and we are to (3) Hope in the future. If this is beginning to sound like a Christmas Carol to you – bear with me – it’s not. Let’s look at each aspect of life separately – past, present and future and see how they work together to cause us to be the person that we are.

First let’s look at the past. Having been a pastor for a lot of years and a prison chaplain I have had multitudes of people pour out their hearts to me. And a tremendous amount of the time the issues or problems they are dealing with are a result of their past or past experiences. I am convinced that one of the biggest thieves of God’s best in a person’s life is their past. I know that this will not come as a shock to you but life is not fair. If it were, there would be no child abuse or abortion, no thieves stealing people’s life savings, etc. Isaiah 59:15-16, tells us that the Lord saw that there was no judgment and He had to bring salvation through His own arm (Jesus). Our justice only comes through

Christ and it is in His timing. If we live in the past – it will not only rob us of today but also of our future.

Many people's relationships are destroyed because of baggage from the past being brought into the relationship. Even your relationship with the Lord will suffer if you cannot let go of the past and look at it in the proper perspective. I have seen first-hand people spiritually and emotionally paralyzed because they were holding on to the past. Past wounds and hurts injustices, disappointments, etc., causing them not to be able to see the hand of the Lord working on their behalf.

No matter how tight you hold on to the past you cannot change it. I can tell from my own experience that the past can only hold you if you hold on to it. I grew up in an abusive violent home literally every day not knowing if one of us would be killed. I chose to forgive and to let the past go. Because of that decision the past has no hold on me and the Lord was able to bring healing and deliverance where there were wounds and fear. When I look at my past instead of torment I have joy – why? Because I see the faithfulness of God. I see that God was and is my deliverer. I could choose to look at all the years it took for my deliverance to come and feel sorry for myself but instead I chose life, I chose joy, I chose to be grateful for what the Lord has done. I remember like David how God brought victory over my enemy – how He put him under my feet. Remember, there ain't no future in the past. As you know that is a line from an old song but it is very true. The Lord even had my husband prophecy this phrase to a woman one time because her past was sabotaging her present and future.

There are two very strong statements in the New Testament that tell us how to deal with the past. The first one is in Philippians 3:13-14, as mentioned above where Paul says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The second one speaks of when we are born again. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

Whether our past is made up of injustices done to us or injustices that we have done to others we have no right to hold onto it if we are in Christ Jesus, it belongs to Him, covered under His blood. We either learn from past experiences and allow them to have a positive effect on our nature, character, etc. or we stay bound to them and the hurt and defeat that they bring.

Many people are robbed of their faith for today because they focus on losses or disappointments of yesterday. If we look at our past or our yesterdays properly we will see our failures our weaknesses, areas of sin and learn from them so that the enemy

will not be able to continually trip us up in these areas. Think about this – do you give more credibility to your past experiences or to what the Word of God says about you and your situation. Either the past will shape you or the Word of God will. You get to choose. The past is a lesson tool that you can use to determine how the enemy works against you and what you can do to change his ability to work against you now. If Jesus is Lord of your life – then you must allow Him to be Lord of your past also. Remember, if you hold on to it – it belongs to you, not to Him.

Your present is a gift from the Lord. It is your opportunity to lay up treasures in heaven where neither rust nor moth can corrupt it. What you do today – the choices and decisions you make not only determine your today but lay the foundation for your tomorrow. Galatians 6:7-10 tells us, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

Each day that we are given is a precious thing. It is an opportunity to work with God, to be conformed to the image of Christ to build the kingdom of God, to see Him in marvelous ways. God expects us to have good expectations regarding Him. Hebrews 11:6 says that we must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 10:35 also says, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.” Don’t let your past steal or establish your expectations for today; let the Word of God set your expectations. When you read the Word of God and see how the Lord heals and delivers, the wonderful things He has done and His faithfulness, it will set your expectations if you don’t allow it to be tainted by past disappointments – it will build your faith and confidence. Ephesians 3:20 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.” What is that power that works in us? It’s the Spirit of the Living God trying to establish faith in us, hope in us, and expectation for God to work with.

How many of you are missing out on what the Lord wants to do in your life today because you are either stuck in the past or living in the future. It is important to be able to envision the future. The Lord wants us to establish our hope on the future. It is this hope of the future that keeps our hearts from being troubled. Jesus said in John 14:1-3, “Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God believe also in me. In My Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there ye may be also.” We don’t have to be troubled about the future – we have a place prepared by the Master Himself. If heaven is real to us

then our hearts can rest in knowing who we belong to and where our home really is. We need to become like little children in this; yesterday my five year old said to me, "Mommy I can't wait to get to Heaven." I said, "Why is that?" She began to expound on all the wonderful things she was looking forward to in Heaven, swimming in the river of Life, seeing Jesus, running through the grass holding His hand. She also thinks she will be able to fly. We have a wonderful future that has been established by the blood of the Lamb. And as long as we are on this earth He is working with us to bring about His plans and purposes.

Let us not waste any more of our todays. Let us do what we can do today to build the Kingdom of God, to bring the lost into the kingdom of God. There will come a day when we can no longer work. Today is a gift. Seek the Lord about how you can use each day for His glory. Lay up your treasures in Heaven – they will be there waiting for you.

Finally, for those of you who have had trouble letting go of the past I would ask you to let it go, and I tell you by the Spirit of God, you must let go of the past if you are going to be effective for God – give it to Him – let Him be Lord of your whole life – past, present and future.

Remember past wounds left unhealed steal current faith. If you have difficulty in this area please make a quality decision to let the past go today. Pray this prayer with me. "Lord Jesus, Father God, I ask forgiveness for holding on to the past. I realize it does not belong to me – I have given my life to You – so it belongs to you. I forgive all those who have hurt and sinned against me in the past. I ask forgiveness for all those I have hurt and sinned against. Lord please forgive me. I release my past – it no longer has power over me, it cannot hurt me for I am a new creation, my past is hidden in you Jesus it is under Your blood. You are my healer, you are my deliver. I receive healing and deliverance from the wounds and hurts of the past. Behold, all things have passed away, I receive the reality of being a new creation in you. Thank you Jesus