

Forgetting Those Things Which Lie Behind

Forgetting those things which are behind so you can reach forward to those things which are ahead (Phil. 3:13) can bring gut-wrenching pain to your soul. I know that pain all too well as I have experienced it a number of times.

To describe the process as difficult would be an understatement.

Sometimes moving on feels like leaving a piece of yourself behind. Other times forgetting those things which are behind seems like an exercise in futility. Still other times reaching forward to those things which are ahead is, well, let's just say you may feel there is a tug of war in your soul threatening to tear you apart.

Again, I know that pain all too well as I have experienced it a number of times.

Forgetting those things which are behind is perhaps one of the greatest challenges we can face, especially when those "things" were a major part of our daily lives. I've had to "forget" a husband, more than one best friend, several ministries and more—and sometimes in the midst of great **persecution**.

But I'm here to tell you that we can forget those things which are behind. Or at least we can remember them without the gut-wrenching pain we felt while we were making the transition. And we can press on toward the goal with joy.

Soulsh Realities

It all starts in the mind. What we think about can live on as reality in our souls long after a painful event passes. I remember a difficult split with a friend who was emotionally

unstable. This friend was dear to me on many levels, but not a week went by when she didn't have an emotional meltdown and attack me verbally for "not being a friend." It was a false accusation, and she knew it in her heart. But she wanted from me what only Jesus could give her.

The **Holy Spirit** told me at one point that if it happened again to walk away because it was abusive—and it was distracting me from God's will. And it wasn't helping her, either. But alas, soulish compassion can cloud spiritual discernment.

It did indeed happen again, but I didn't obey God and walk away. Instead, I tried for another year to counsel her through her emotional issues with absolutely no fruit. In fact, it only got worse. I had become an enabler, of sorts. Finally, it got so bad that I had to cut the relationship out of my life altogether. And it was a painful cut for both of us.

Guilt, sadness, **condemnation**—a flood of emotions came to plague me. That's when I had to make a decision about what I was going to think about. The Bible says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). The enemy wanted me to wallow in that guilt, sadness and condemnation until I ran back to my friend with repentance and continued a relationship God had told me to cut off a year earlier.

Resisting the Past

I had to resist that temptation with everything in me at first. After all, everyone likes a familiar friend. And nobody likes to hurt a friend. I had to quickly grab hold of the reins of my mind, stop replaying the scenes over and over again in my soul, and reach forward to those things which are ahead. The only way out is through, and it starts with a disciplined mind.

Maybe for you it's not a relationship, per se. Maybe you need to forget past hurts, past failures—or even past successes. The point is this: Dwelling on an unpleasant past, no matter

how recent or far away that past is, can't lead to healing. Dwelling on an unpleasant past isn't the path to **forgiveness**. Dwelling on an unpleasant past can't send you to the next place God wants to take you. It just can't. Dwelling on an unpleasant past can only keep you tied to that past, which hinders you from moving forward in God.

Beloved, if you were led by the **Spirit of God** to end your relationship with a person or place or if the enemy caused you to experience great loss in your life through death, divorce or some other tragedy, God has something better for you. And if your past is one of shame, guilt and condemnation for sins you've committed, God is ready, willing and able to forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:19).

Trust for Restoration

Beloved, trust God. He will restore anything the enemy stole from your life—and He may even restore relationships with people who walked away from you (or people He told you to walk away from). Our job is not to wonder what could have been or what will be. Our job is to obey God. Be assured, when we don't walk in obedience to the Word the challenge to forget those things which are behind becomes even greater. He gives grace to those who seek to obey.

God is a progressive God. He's always moving forward. By His grace—and with a will determined not to dwell on an unpleasant past—we can overcome the challenge of forgetting those things that are behind. I won't lie to you. It won't be easy. The past may even come back to "haunt" you sometimes. But the battle really is in the mind. The good news is, you have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16) and God has a good plan for you. Press forward to that goal. Leave the past behind. Amen.

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