

Philippians 3:13,14 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, :14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ.

The 'it' is God's purposes in calling Paul in the first place. After 30 years of ministry he still doesn't know the full extent of all that God want to do w/ him. True of us.

Lightfoot: My brothers, let other men vaunt their security. Such is not my language. I do not consider that I have the prize already in my grasp. This, and this only, is my rule. Forgetting the landmarks already passed as straining every nerve and muscle in the onward race

Wuest: Brethren, as for myself, as I look back upon my life and calmly draw a conclusion, I am not counting myself yet as one who has in an absolute and complete way laid hold [of that for which I have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus]; but one thing: I, in fact, am forgetting completely the things that are behind, and am stretching forward to the things that are in front; bearing down upon the goal

Brethren – adelphos – a, unity + delphus, womb – from the same womb, child of God born again by the HS—of the same spiritual family.

Arrest their attention because some felt they'd already arrived, sinless perfection—Paul takes low position.

'not **regard** myself' – Business term for compute – Eng. 'logic'- He carefully evaluated his life, gave it serious thought and concluded, rightly so—God's not done yet.

'laid hold of' – not attained yet, refuting the false teaching of total sanctification. 'I'm not perfect and I know it,' Paul is saying

'But one thing' – 'I do' is added – emphatic purpose and conduct—one aim and ambition in life. Like Olympic runner – Some try live in K of G while taking trips to Egypt for leeks and garlic

Before the Chicago fire in 1871, D. L. Moody was involved in Sunday School promotion, YMCA work, evangelistic meetings, and many other activities; but after the fire, he determined to devote himself exclusively to evangelism. "**One thing I do**" became a reality to him. As a result, millions of people subsequently heard the Gospel

In 15th C Spain led the world. Their coins reflected their national conceit '*NothingFurther*' indicating Spain was all there is, nothing beyond. Then the New World was discovered and Spain changed its coins to read '*More Beyond*' - acknowledging they had it wrong there was something beyond them. Are we nothing further Christians or more beyond believers.

Paul had a single focus beyond where he was, it was the prize, upward call...past accomplishments nor previous setbacks were not going to impede his progress.

God chose him to be a champion against sin—greatest want in Church today is holiness
Why? Be perfect as heavenly Father is perfect. Paul's greatest passion.

Vladimir Lenin was the fanatical architect of the former USSR. A colleague once said of him, Lenin thinks about nothing but revolution. He talks about nothing but revolution. He eats and drinks revolution. And if he dreams at night, he must dream about revolution

'forgetting what lies behind' – completely forgetting, our continual manner of life. A choice, so past not hinder God's future for us. As a runner not glancing back at competition and thrown off pace, slowing, stumbling. We not look back at failures or successes. Things that might cause us to loose hope slow down because I'm a loser or rest in accomplishments and not have to try so hard. Backward look impedes forward momentum. Conscious refusal to be absorbed w/ what's behind that it no impede progress ahead.

No achievements nor failures obstruct his running the race. Allusion to Greek races, distractions cause loss. Used to have a custom in Italy as midnight of New Year's approached, streets were cleared, no traffic or people, then 12 midnight windows flew open to sound of laughter, music fireworks and each member of the family tossed out old pots and dishes, despised knick knacks, hated furniture, various personal items which reminded them of things from the past year they wanted to forget.

Clever devise of enemy to slow us down is keep preoccupied w/ past failures or successes. If we are to progress further we must leave the past in the past. To be preoccupied is to use up valuable energy better used for today's battles.

Many church's Paul started could give him reason for slacking off. Or former persecution discourage him from going on. Or all he suffered, looked at and say I've suffered enough. But Paul said I forget those things behind me.

Failure brings preoccupation w/ self and discouragement and tendency to drop out of race. Past victories can hang be hang ups, if stop to congratulate self. 'The easiest way to give resurrection to old corruptions is to erect a trophy over their graves.'

Runner must not be distracted by the cheers or jeers, can't take eyes off prize or else danger of loosing motivation. When devil brings up your past remind yourself of future.

Illinois Medical Journal 'Why we must learn to forget the Past'. Two days out of the week we not worry about. Two days kept from fear and apprehension. Yesterday w/ it's mistakes and cares, its aches and pains, its faults and blunders. Yesterday has passed forever beyond our control. Nothing can bring it back. We cannot undo a single act, we cannot erase a single word spoken, Yesterday is gone. The other day is Tomorrow w/ it's adversities, its burdens, its large promise and poor performance. Tomorrow is beyond our immediate control. Tomorrows sun will rise either in splendor or behind clouds but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in Tomorrow for it is as yet unborn. That leaves only one day, Today. Any one by the grace of God can fight the battles of just one day. It is only when we add the burdens of those two awful eternities, Yesterday and Tomorrow that we break down. It is not the experience of Today that drives men mad, it is remorse or bitterness for something which happened Yesterday and the dread of what Tomorrow may bring. Let us therefore journey but one day at a time.

Grantland Rice gives an interesting illustration of forgetting (in *The Tumult and the Shouting*) writing that...

Because golf expresses the flaws of the human swing—a basically simple maneuver—it causes more self-torture than any game short of Russian roulette. The quicker the average golfer can forget the shot he has dubbed or knocked off line—and concentrate on the next shot—the sooner he begins to improve and enjoy

golf. Little good comes from brooding about the mistakes we've made. The next shot, in golf or in life, is the big one.

Paul is giving essentially the same advice in this verse, emphasizing that the key to forward movement in the Christian race is to set our eyes on the goal and keep looking ahead, because when we look back to our past sin, we open the door to discouragement. What do you do when the past begins to "slow you down"? When past sin gets you down, when you find yourself brooding about it, or when you become discouraged because of a specific failure, if you've not yet done so, then confess it to God (He already knows and is waiting to hear you humble yourself and accept responsibility), claim His complete, "no strings attached" forgiveness, and put it behind. In our race toward the goal of every increasing Christlikeness, as in golf, the next shot is the big one. And as a corollary, it's always too soon to quit.

Hampton Keathley has this advice on **forgetting**...

We Cannot Do Anything About Last Year's Harvest. Whatever we did last year, last month, last week, even yesterday is over and past. There are no time machines to take us back so we can change what we did yesterday. Nothing we do today can in any way change the record of what was sown and what was or will be reaped as a consequence. It is either a harvest that will be worthy of praise or burning—or perhaps portions of both—but whatever was produced stands as the record of the lives we live on this earth. The problem with all too many Christians is that they are not forgetting the past and reaching on to what is before ([Php 3:13, 14](#)).

If we failed to produce a crop worthy of the Lord's praise last year our brooding and wallowing in self-pity for having wasted this time will only cause us to fail to produce anything glorifying to the Lord this year. If we did use the opportunities the Lord gave us and produced a harvest of good things, we cannot rest on our laurels. This is another year; and just because the Holy Spirit led and blessed last year, as we were obedient to Him and the Word, does not mean that we automatically will produce anything good this year.

We Must Learn to Live With the Consequences of Our Failures. When people believe they are failures or that their failures (evil sowing) forever ruin their chances for success and marks them for life, it neutralizes them and wipes out their ability to use their life and the gifts God has given them.

But how do we avoid this? By the following:

By confessing our failures to God ([1Jn 1:9](#); [Ps 32:5-note](#)). This wipes the slate clean.

By knowing and resting in the fact we are forgiven through Christ and can move ahead for the Lord and in life regardless of the past ([Ps 32:1-8-note](#); [Ps 51:1-13-note](#)).

By learning from our failures: use them as back doors to success ([Ps 119:59, 67, 71-note](#)). The principle is we need to learn from our failures ([He 5:8-note](#)).

By forgetting the past (triumphs and failures) so we can press on for the future with renewed commitment to God's will ([Php 3:13,14](#); [Lk 9:62](#)).

By seeing and using the trials caused by our failures as character builders. "The tests of life are to make, not break us. Trouble may demolish a man's business but build up his character. The blow at the outward man may be the greatest blessing to the inner man."¹⁰ Again consider [Ps. 119:67-note](#), [Ps 119:71-note](#) with [Jas 1:2-note](#), [Jas 1:3, 4-note](#); [1Pe 1:6, 7-note](#).

As **Lawrence** mentioned (see his book **John Lawrence, Life's Choices, Multnomah Press, Portland, 1982, pp. 22-23**), brooding and wallowing in self-pity for having wasted some part of one's life will only cause us to fail to produce anything glorifying to the Lord in the year ahead.

Therefore: We Must Commit Ourselves to This Year's Harvest. We must press on in our lives by sowing for the future and for the Lord. Whether we did or did not produce effectively in last year's harvest, we must neither sit around in self-pity or guilt, or sit on our laurels. We must press on toward the upward call of God in Christ. The following passages illustrate what we need to do by way of pressing on whether we have experienced victory and growth, or failure, or a lack of growth. (**The Seven Laws of the Harvest- Recommended Read**)

Steven Cole says that in regard to our attitude toward **past** events, sins, failures, etc, we should just "Leave them where they are "In the past." Pastor Cole notes that

the picture is of a runner who does not make the mistake of looking over his shoulder. His eyes are fixed on the goal. If he made mistakes earlier in the race, he doesn't kick himself by replaying them in his mind. If he did well, he doesn't gloat about it. He leaves the past behind and keeps moving on toward the finish line.

Many Christians today are being told that to experience healing from their difficult pasts, they need to delve into their pasts and relive the hurtful things that happened to them. This approach has come into the church from the world, not from the Word. It would be wrong to say that verse 13 is all that the Bible says about the past. Even earlier in the chapter, Paul has mentioned his own past life in Judaism.

It can be helpful to reflect on what happened to us in the past in order to understand where we're at in the present and where we need to grow. There is a biblical case for self examination, which means evaluating things that have happened in the past, both good and bad, as a means of growing now. But our text shows that there needs to be a balance. Paul means here that we should not be controlled by the past. Someone has used the analogy of a car's rear view mirror. You don't drive by

looking in the mirror. You drive by looking ahead out of the windshield. But it's helpful to take occasional glances in your mirror and use the information to make decisions about how to drive safely in the present and future. But if you spend too much time looking in your mirror, you'll probably crash because you're not paying attention to the present. In the same way, we need to take periodic glances backward, but we also need to put the past (good and bad) behind us, accept God's grace and enabling for the present, and move on with what He is calling us to do now. ([Philippians 3:12-16 Christian Growth Process](#))

Theodore Epp writes the following advice on **Dealing With Your Past...**

We can do nothing about the past except make necessary confession. And when confession is made, the Bible promises: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" ([1 John 1:9](#)).

By confession, sin is placed under the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and when it is under the blood, it does not condemn any longer.

Unless the past is dealt with, one is not prepared to live in the present nor to go on into the future. Unless the past is dealt with, it becomes a haunting memory that saps the strength of the believer so he is unable to honor Christ in his daily life.

What God does with sin when it is confessed is explained in various passages. [Isaiah 44:22](#) says,

I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud, and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you (NASB).

[Hebrews 8:12](#) (note) says

FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE" (NASB)

Someone has said,

The present must forget the past by correction, or else the past will become a moral and spiritual liability for the future.

Consider some items that need to be forgotten: failures--they keep our faith from advancing; successes--they create pride (see [Pr 16:18](#)); losses--they drag us down so we cannot serve the Lord the way we should; grievances--they produce false attitudes (see [1Cor 13:6](#)); sorrows--God can heal all heartaches; discouragements--we need to remember Christ, not disappointments, thwarted hopes and plans.

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more ([He 10:17-note](#)) (Back to the Bible) (Copyright Back to the Bible. Used by permission. All rights reserved)

