

Grace Evangelical Free Church  
Issues & Answers: Things Behind and Ahead  
**Philippians 3:12-21**

The life and ministry of the apostle Paul was dominated by one supreme objective: press on.

**Philippians 3:12: “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.”**

- Grammatical Usage: “**press on**” or in the Greek, “diókó” meaning, “aggressively chase; firmly grasp”.
- Literal Interpretation: I do not consider myself to have “arrived”, spiritually, nor do I consider myself already perfect. But I keep going on, grasping ever more firmly that purpose for which Christ grasped me.
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. If we are to succeed in the race of life we must very deliberately “forget“, and very deliberately “press on”.

#### 1. THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND WHICH WE SHOULD FORGET

Strangely enough, a good memory is not always a great asset! It is not the things we forget which we should have remembered which cause the most trouble; it is the things we remember which we should have forgotten.

- We must forget our past sins. That is, if we have truly repented, confessed and forsaken them (**Proverbs 28:13**), then we must forget them. If we have confessed and renounced our sin, God has forgiven it and forgotten it (**1 John 1:9**; compare **Psalms 103:12; Isaiah 44:22; Micah 7:19; Hebrews 10:17**). If God has forgotten our sins we must do the same, otherwise the memory of them hinder us.
- We must forget our past failures. This is not easy, but if we are constantly dwelling upon our failures and reviving the memory of them, our peace is destroyed, our progress is impeded and our usefulness is limited.
- We must forget our past successes. To dwell constantly upon our past achievements will certainly not ensure present victory, and it may in fact engender pride. Some Christians are living on a past experience and some Christian workers are living on a past reputation.
- We must forget our past pleasures. The Children of Israel failed just here, and frequently we read of them crying for the abundance of food and water which they had had in Egypt (**Numbers 11:5-6; 20:5; 21:5**). To be engrossed with past advantages is to fail to realize the value of God’s present miraculous provision.
- We must forget our past unhappy experiences. Have we lost a fortune? Forget it! - thinking of it cannot bring it back. Has someone let us down? Forget it! - to keep reviving the memory of the experience will cause resentment, and this will do far more harm to ourselves than to anyone else.

- We must forget our past blessings. They are insufficient for today's needs, so we must cry out with the psalmist - **Psalm 103:2**! Yesterday's provision will not suffice for today's demands. The Lord's provision is "new every morning" (**Lamentations 3:23**).
- We must forget the sins and the failures of others. This needs to be said, for we so easily remember the shortcomings of other people. If we have been wronged, we must forgive and we must forget. Do not say, "I can't!" You can! You must!

In order to forget we must reverse the process of remembering. To remember one must revive the image and keep on reviving it. Now reverse the process; refuse to revive the image. Forget!

## 2. "THINGS AHEAD" WHICH WE MUST STRIVE TO ATTAIN

The apostle speaks of three things for which he reached forth...for which he was constantly "on the stretch":

- We must press on to perfection. The first part of **v. 12** tells us this, and the word "**perfect**" means "spiritually mature", not sinless or faultless. Here the need for growth is implied (**Hebrews 6:1**). In order to grow we must feed upon the Word of God; we must regularly engage in prayer and have sufficient work to do in the Lord's vineyard.
- We must press on to take hold of the purpose for which God has taken hold of us. The second part of **v. 12** tells us this. God's general purpose for us is indicated in **Romans 8:28-30**, but He has a particular purpose for every one of us - a life plan.
- We must press on with deep concern to win the lost. This surely should be our attitude to those mentioned in **vv. 18-19**. As we hurry on to the time of the Lord's coming, which will mean glory for us and gloom for the lost, we should be burdened to win souls (**2 Peter 3:11-12**). There is an urgency!

## 3. WHY ARE WE TO DO "THIS ONE THING", WHICH CONSISTS OF "FORGETTING WHAT IS BEHIND, AND STRAINING TOWARD WHAT IS AHEAD"?

- Because we are citizens of Heaven. Heaven is our home; our names are written there (**Luke 10:20**), and many who are members of God's family are already there (**Ephesians 3:15**).
- Because the Lord is coming to take us Home. What an incentive this is to holy living (**1 John 1:3**) and to patient endurance (**Romans 8:25**)!
- Because we shall exchange these old bodies for new ones. This is what **v. 21** says. We shall have a body just like His body (**1 Corinthians 15:20; 23**).
- Because the Prize Day is coming. **V. 14** tells us this, and it reminds us that we shall all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, to be rewarded or to suffer loss (**Romans 14:12; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10**).
- Because Glory is coming. The truth of **v. 21**.

➤ Conclusion: Am I willing to forget in order to attain what Christ has for me?