



One Thing

1. Forgetting what lies behind

2. Straining towards the prize that is Jesus

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Read

- **Philippians 3**

1. Intro

I had a phrase in my heart that led me to Philippians 3. I have preached on this numerous times but I felt the Holy Spirit say he wanted to bring a new word. And Paul starts saying that to write the same things is no trouble. So, this may have been said before but it is worth repeating. It is good for you to read this word.

V13-V14 One thing I doI press on towards the goal

Forgetting what has been, I press on. City Slickers was a film about someone who is disenfranchised with life and decides to go and be a cowboy. The old wise cowboy he travels with asks do you know what the secret of life is? – it is one thing! – but you have to work out that one thing for yourself – if you can figure it out then your life is complete. You have to figure it out for yourself. Paul tells here what it is – the One thing for a fruitful life is to forget what is behind and press on to get hold of the full measure of Jesus Christ.

We are heading into another season of change – we are all approaching this next season in different ways – some anxious and some fine. As a church we have been birthed well and healthily but we are still a baby – we are fragile – there will be differing responses as we go forward. There may be anxiety about mission for instance. How are we to transition well? The way we do it well is to forget what holds behind and strain towards the future.

2. Forgetting what lies behind

Don't allow the past to shape our identity

We are all shaped by our experiences and our past. Paul will contend that we should be more shaped by the hope of who we are in Jesus than our past life. Our identity and confidence in Jesus is far more stable and secure than our past life. Elsa from Frozen says that the past is in the past and we should let it go.

Forget our confidences

Paul lists all the things that he used to have confidence in – under the Law and Judaism he ticks every box in terms of righteousness. All from the past that he found his confidence and identity in he now counts as loss. I am not going to place my confidence in these things. Anything that is not Christ that we get our confidence in is questionable. How are we defined? What do we put our confidence in? We all have things we hold on.



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The pandemic can shake and disturb us – but we can put our confidence in Jesus who does not change. If our confidence and security is in other things we end up putting our confidence in the flesh. We are children of God – beloved in Christ but perhaps we are putting our confidence and identity in other things.

Past failures

Very real issue. Paul says in v12 – I thank Him that has given me strength. Formally I was a blasphemer, an insolent opponent. But I received mercy. The grace of our Lord overflowed in me. For Paul it would have been easy to write himself off from being used by God. He could have reeled off all the reasons why the past would invalidate him. But our response can be the same as his- we too received overflowing mercy. We can be hesitant to step into new things and new seasons because of the failures of the past. We write ourselves off and enter into new things with a sense of fear. A lot of us feel that fear about evangelisms – we have that voice in our head that says you can't do this – Paul says don't be defined by past experience. Step into the grace that He wants to overflow into your life. They don't have to be barriers

Past Hurts

We are molded by our hurts in the past. I heard Simon at Riverside tell a story about when he was 19 he snapped a ligament in his knee. He had to have a cast for six weeks – all muscles had withered away – he couldn't bend his knee – he felt so exposed and vulnerable and fearful because of this injury. He didn't feel he could put any pressure on it – he didn't like to have anybody get close to him. We are the same with emotional hurt – any pain can make us spiritually vulnerable and immobile. What if that wound opens up again?

What if my wound is not healed? Injury and hurt can be like living life attached to a bungy rope of past pain that always pulls us back. Paul knows what it was to experience pain. Even with tears Paul talks about people that have done him harm. He experienced physical and emotional pain and rejection. Churches in chaos and rebellion. He knew difficulties. What did it mean for Paul to forget past hurts? It is not to forget them it is to not let them master you – not to be pulled back by these things. We all carry scars we all of us carry internal scars in our heart they can either be memories of pain or memorials of grace. Memorials of healing – our scars are a sign of grace in our lives.

My mum had a pace maker fitted – she had to undergo suffering and has a scar of new healing and grace for her. If she didn't have the scar she wouldn't be here again. They can be signs of victory. Think of Jesus's scars – He is in heaven occupying space in the form of a man – and he bears the scars of the cross. When He looks down at the scars what does he feel? Is He reminded of loss or victory and gain? They were transformed into markers of an overcoming love – I believe it is God's heart that our scars are transformed in the same way.



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Past Comforts

Paul talks of opponents who live to satisfy their bellies and of their comfort. They glory in their shame with their mind set on earthly things. They are set on self-serving things – having a mind set on the comforts of the world. Paul knew what it meant to live in discomfort. No one was throwing rocks at his head when he was a pharisee – are there comforts that the Lord is asking you to lay down. Especially during lockdown that we have leant on – earthly comforts that have now become habits – we just get a sense that it is time to lay these earthly comforts down. The slow rhythm and the things that distract us – they can be habitual snares.

In relation to church – the Holy Spirit is asking us to lay down getting used to community at a distance. We have been separated – we need to step out of this and this will not be easy for us. The idea of doing that might fill you with anxiety. Getting close to people to minister and embrace one another with love and time again may fill us with fear. He wants us to be living in tents not castles. We are invited to step out of these things.

These things can be baggage- a rucksack of rocks and burdens – I feel the Holy Spirit is saying let it go. Let it go of comfort and failures. And then what ? Are we asked to step into nothing ?

3. Straining towards the prize that is Jesus

Not that have already attained it

It is difficult to just be chill here because we have words in our text like straining and pressing on in the Lord. It is here it is in the word. What do you think? Wrapped around this phrase there are beautiful words that say this isn't so great a trial. Paul says I haven't come into the fullness of this – but He has made me His own. He has won me. He has poured out His blood for me. He has done everything – I am pressing on to get hold of more because I belong to Him. Because of Him. He is reiterating that I have been found in Him – righteousness that depends and comes from faith. I can know Jesus comes not from what I have done – but through the gift of grace in faith. That is my security and my confidence – it is not based on what I am doing – because it has all been done for me by Jesus.

Hold true to what we have attained

We can press on for more – but we already have it. I want it because I have it. I am pressing on that I have it all but I need more. This is the assurance of our faith. It changes the straining for what we already have – we have won the prize – straining on with effort and endurance – because I know what is at the summit of the mountain. Our eternal fellowship with Jesus – straining on towards the prize – what is the prize ? Jesus he is the prize



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Jesus is the prize

When I was 14 or 15 I had a French exchange student – we went to London to visit an arcade and the student and his friend were winning bundles of tickets – they had spent so much and got so many tickets but when they traded them in they just got a key ring and they were so disappointed. My sister entered a colouring competition – she got second place and we went to get her prize. And all she had was a two-hour presentation on time – share and some colouring pencils and was totally underwhelmed.

We can sometimes be underwhelmed with Jesus as the prize. We can say is that it? Is there more – the crown and the rewards – the prize is Jesus but what else can I get for all this enduring and straining.

If we look at Numbers 11.4-6 People of Israel wandering the desert, they have experienced so many great things – God has provided them with manna. But the rabble moaned about lack of fish and meat to eat they missed cucumbers and the garlic – they moaned that now all we have is Manna. Nothing at all to eat but the supernatural food from heaven – I'd rather have a cucumber they moaned.

This bread from heaven is not enough for me- are we like that? Jesus is the bread from heaven – He is the bread of life – yeah great! You may say but I also like cucumber and garlic and leeks. I heard a pastor talk about the end of his ministry and he asked for feedback about his life's work. A women told him that we get the gospel is you and you kept on talking about it but sometimes we needed to hear other things!

We get that Jesus is the prize – we get the gospel is great but we want something else. If you are looking for other things then you wont find it in our church. What every gain I had, all that comfort, I'd counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus.

Why because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus? – compare your hurt and comfort and loss with the worth of Jesus – and see the prize of knowing Jesus. Everything else is junk and rubbish apart from knowing the surpassing worth of Jesus. That is how we press on by seeing over and over again that we get to know Him. Not just teaching, or theology but the real living person of Jesus because He is known to me.

Lay past confidence, failures, hurts and comforts down – they may not be bad things- but they are not what we really need – we need Jesus because He is the best for me. Let's pray for afresh revelation that Jesus is the best for us.