

A Focused Life

Text: Philippians 3:13

But I am focusing all my energies on this one thing forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead. Phil.3: 13 NLT

In the movie, "The Inn of the Sixth Happiness," Ingrid Bergman portrayed Gladys Aylward. Her life was described in a book entitled A Little Woman. Gladys appeared to be under qualified only suitable to be a maid. But through perseverance and determination she arrived and ministered to the poorest of China. [The communicator will do well by seeing the movie or even better reading one of her biographies.]

The dramatic scene is about her risky dangerous journey across mountains to save one hundred orphan children by leading them safely across mountains from the Japanese invaders. She was determined to fulfill God's call upon her life. EVERY PERSON CLAIMED BY CHRIST HAS BEEN GRASPED FOR A PURPOSE - THE DESIRE OF CHRIST IS FOR THAT PERSON TO BE OCCUPIED WITH THAT PURPOSE. We are not just saved for a future paradise, but also for an earthly purpose. Ephesians.2: 10

Paul had whittled his life down to one single purpose, i.e. "*To know Christ experientially and intimately and to fulfill the purpose for which he was drafted by Christ.*" IT WAS HIS MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION. In Philippians 3 we are shown how one stays focused on God's plan for our life.

A FOCUSED LIFE NEEDS PERIODIC TIMES OF SPIRITUAL AMNESIA.

That forgetfulness includes both past failures and successes. Sins against people that are irretrievable. See Paul's failure to save Stephen in Acts 7:58. [The communicator can also allude to the testimonies of Paul of his injurious assaults on the people of The Way]. But Stephen died and there was nothing that could be done. So Paul could write in Romans 5: 1 that those who acknowledge Jesus as the One and Only Savior have been justified. The slate is clean and you cannot keep punishing yourselves:

[The communicator can choose verses like: I John 1:9, Psalm 103:12 and Micah 7:19 and Hebrews 10:17 to affirm this great truth.]

Also it means forgetting past:

- Failures in Ministry.
- He had misjudged Mark.
- He had not fared well in Jerusalem.
- He had been misunderstood.

II Timothy 4:14-16 – May be the hardest of all to forget is one's : Success in Ministry His letters which were inspired of God (five at this time.) his visions, his gifts, his church planting, three missionary journeys. Paul closed the chapter on his reputation, credentials, resumes of the past. They seemed to

garbage, as for as having any meaning for his future pursuit, 3:7-8. He was not promoting the past mercies of God, (Romans 12: 1) but an intentional lack of recall of the past so that his focus would the future would not be slackened.

THE PAST CANNOT OCCUPY THE CENTER OF OUR THINKING.

A FAMOUS EDITOR: "*The true secret of editing is to know what to put in the waste basket we probably need to throw a lot of stuff into the garbage.*" My brother has a message on his answering machine: *Yesterday's past, tomorrow's the future, but today's a gift. That's why it's called the Present.*

A FOCUSED LIFE SUGGESTS A GOAL.

The mature, growing Christian is one who recognizes that they progress in their development and understanding of the goal. See verse 12. and the word perfect. An analogy might be ripe oranges which at one stage are green.

A FUNCTIONAL PERFECTION ADEQUATE FOR SOME GIVEN PURPOSE.

- Paul speaks in staccato, abrupt language.
- One thing is not spelled out, but you can feel the passion.
- It's all wrapped up in athletic jargon.
- He lived in Ephesus for three years where the Olympic Games were held. I'm sure he attended at least one. And in the races there was a post at the end and the runner ran to be the first one to grasp the post. You can picture the body leaning forward with arms outstretched eager to grab the post.

A FOCUSED LIFE DEMANDS A SINGLE- MINDEDNESS.

To Paul, the Christian is God's athlete. Discipline, training, exercise, execution and game plan are vital. The athlete follows Covey's second step of an effective plan. *Begin with the end in view.* See Acts 20:24 and I Cor. 9:26 Paul recognized that not all of his Christian friends were ready to commit to this high and holy hunger, but he believed that God would bring them to that desire, v. 15. He certainly did that for Paul, II Tim. 4:6-8.

CONCLUSION: Then those he observes whose life is not focused touched his heart. Their eyes are only on the temporary, the fading. They do not see Jesus ahead of them.

- They do not see heaven ahead of them.
- They do not see the new bodies ahead of them.
- They only are looking at their navels.
- And talk about their emptiness.