

Spiritual Maturity (4)

Ponder: Leaving the past behind

Scripture: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended: but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14, NKJV).

When I contemplate leaving my past behind, I usually think about sins I have committed. God has forgiven me, and I mustn’t let my guilt feelings drag me down.

While that’s all true, when Paul wrote about forgetting his past, he wasn’t talking about his former hatred of Jesus or persecution of the church. Instead, he had in mind those things he had formerly viewed as tremendously important, and about which he had boasted: his Hebrew pedigree, his status as a Pharisee, his zealous observance of the Law of Moses, and such like. “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish” (Phil. 3:7-8a).

Spiritually immature people define themselves by whatever successes and accolades they have in the world. High education, great material wealth, political power, and family background are not inherently evil; they might even be used to great advantage in serving God. But they can also get in the way, distracting you from what is truly important: trusting and obeying the Lord.

Mature people, on the other hand, define themselves by their relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything else is trash at best; eventually, it will all go up in smoke.

Paul had far more “bragging rights” than I will ever have; and he had vastly more than his critics had. But the only times he mentioned them were to show that those things were no longer his focus. They no longer defined him. He had bigger fish to fry as a bondservant of Christ

If you have great successes and accomplishments, I’m happy for you. Use them to God’s glory – but don’t let them define you! First and foremost, you are a disciple of Jesus. “Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind” (Phil. 3:15a).

Song: “Jesus Is All The World To Me”

Prayer: Father in heaven, humble us to realize that our worldly accomplishments, however great or small, fade into insignificance compared to our relationship to Jesus. May we treasure that relationship infinitely above all else. In Jesus’ name, Amen.