

Looking Forward

This week's NEWSLETTER article will be a shorter one than usual—trying a little to make up for the marathon article last week...hope you were able to muddle through it. As I sit here, I have just 7 school days left before I hang it up for good. The new style of teaching has passed me by and this “old dog” is not willing to learn any of the “new tricks” that are now required of classroom teachers. In just a few days, I will celebrate my 65th birthday. I look forward to both with great anticipation. It will be good to see what the future holds in store for me.

As a teacher of history, I have been obsessed with looking BACK – relating the events that have shaped this world and this country. In looking at the past, we are made aware of what our future should be. Learning from the mistakes of the past should help us to do better in the future. The old saying “those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it” is true. It can be said of those of us who attempt to live for God.

Paul had an eventful past, one many people could be proud of. He was the consummate Jew. In **Philippians 3:5-6**, he gives his resume':

“circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.”

However, when he came to know Christ, all those things mattered little. He goes on in **verses 7-11**:

“whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”

His future was far more important than his past. He put it this way in **verses 13 and 14**:

“...one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

Don't forget the past; learn from it and then leave it behind. Always look forward, doing the will of God. **2 Peter 3:11-12** says it this way:

“live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.”

That's what I intend to do with the rest of the time God gives me. Sounds like something all of us should do.

---Johnny Stephens