



Paul's Personal Touch

We all, of any age, have at some point in our lives written a personal letter or note to someone, expressing how we feel about life and our approach to it. The letter to the church at Philippi is perhaps the most personal of all of Paul's epistles. He writes, **"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"** (Philippians 3:13-14).

There are several things for us to notice in Paul's declaration. First, there is the realization that even in the most faithful of saints, there is always room for improvement in our service to God. He acknowledged that he had not yet attained perfection, but that he was **"reaching forth unto those things which are before."** Listen as he told the Corinthian brethren about himself, **"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"** (I Corinthians 9:27).

Our major problem is when we abide in the flesh. That is when we experience an absence of being able to feel the felt presence of the Spirit of God. Trying to live our lives without the felt presence of the Holy Spirit is pure misery. Paul said that he made himself **"a castaway"** when he was unable to keep his body (the flesh) under subjection. He must have experienced this condition in order to be able to share his declaration to the Corinthian church.

For us to **"press toward the mark"** we must be able to forget the past. Paul had a long list of things which were important to him at one point in his life. He declared that he was **"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"** (Philippians 3:4-5). However, none of these things were worth anything in the true service of God. Paul admits to this in Philippians 3:8, **"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the**

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,..."

As we mature in our service to our Lord, we must develop an increasing level of spirituality as we draw closer to God. As we do so, we will even marvel of how we have committed the sins which make us mourn and be ashamed of our past. Paul, in speaking to young Timothy said, **"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"** (I Timothy 1:15). Paul truly felt to be the chief of sinners when he reflected on past occurrences in his life. However, Jesus told the disciples that, **"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"** (Luke 9:62). While we may never forget our past sins, we are no longer to dwell upon them, but rather to **"press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"** We press on in our attempt to please our redeemer.

Is there indeed a prize to be given a faithful child of God? The answer is yes, however, it is in time and not in eternity! It is not Paradise as some would believe, as that would make Heaven a result of our good works. It is rather by the grace of God that, **"I am what I am, by the grace of God."** Just what does this mean? We are sinners saved by Grace. Paul, In II Timothy 4:7-8 says, **"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."** This **"crown of righteousness"** is none other than the righteousness of Christ which is imputed unto his dear children. How glorious this is for those Redeemed by the Lamb. **"Think About IT!"**