Daily Devotion #119

Memories

*Philippians 3:13– “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.”*

Many of you will remember the song “Memory” made famous by Barbara Streisand in the early 80s. It is a beautiful but sad song. There is a line in the song that tells it all, “*Life was beautiful then. I remember the time I knew what happiness was. Let the memory live again.*”.

I don’t know the intention of the song, but it sounds like it was written from the perspective of someone who loved a certain point in their past and could never seem to remove themselves from it. I’m quite sure that many of us have those memories - times when life seemed so much simpler. When each day was filled with playing or doing whatever you wanted to do while someone else took care of the details. It is true, as we get older, life has a way of getting more challenging. More responsibilities, more details to make sure we pay attention to. More people to be responsible for. Not to mention the fact that our bodies and our minds don’t always work like they once did. Making the earlier years seem much better.

But for some, life in their earlier years was not good. Some of you have experienced the pain of living in a family where love was not the priority - only selfishness. You may have grown up in an environment where your concerns and your feelings were shut down. The things you loved and were motivated by were reduced to nothing more than irritation by those who were supposed to be your caregivers. So for you, your memories are not so good or not good at all. And you would just as soon forget about the pain of those years.

Some of you as you recall your memories, look at the mistakes you made and how those mistakes have affected not only you negatively, but many people around you. And if you could, you would change it all in an instant. But it’s too late because those things are water under the bridge, so to speak.

But is life meant to be that way? Is this life really a series of good memories or bad memories? Not according to God. In fact, the Apostle Paul helps us with this by sharing a little bit of his life. Paul was a very intelligent man. He studied the Law of God under the finest of minds in the Hebrew world at the time. And there was no one more zealous to live righteously than Paul. Even to the point of killing those who disregarded the Law of God. Even those who had surrendered their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 22)

And when the day came where Jesus grabbed Paul’s heart on the road to Damascus as Paul was seeking out more Christians to kill. (Acts 22:5), he changed. He became a new man - a true follower of Christ. And from that moment on, he became one of the greatest, if not the greatest, missionaries of all time - leading many to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

I am quite sure Paul had many memories to deal with once He knew the truth about Jesus and who He is. I’m sure many of those memories haunted Paul. But instead of living in the past and being captive to those memories, he pursued God more. He let go of all the things he once was, both good and bad, and focused his energy and time on pursuing the future God had prepared for him. For him, the past became a weight that was not helpful because it either elevated his flesh in pride or brought him down in discouragement over what he had been and done.

Beloved, don’t be captive to your past. I’m sure God has given you much to rejoice over from the years behind you and many things you wish you could change. Let those times be memories, but don’t allow them to keep you from moving forward with God. Focus your attention on what God has in store for you in the future. The past is the past. But the future is where the greatest of treasures await all of us who are pursuing Christ. And it’s going to be awesome.