



Removing the Shackles

“Freedom from the Past”

Philippians 3:13-14 (tlb)

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Philippians 3:13-14 (tlb) *No, dear brothers, I am still not all I should be, but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us.*

Isaiah 43:18 (niv) *Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.*

....Most people carry some form of emotional baggage.

We can be emotionally bound;

...by reliving offences and hurt in our minds.

...by allowing grief to turn into self-pity.

...by being plagued with guilt.

Paul says in verse 13, "*Forgetting the past and looking forward.*"

We can do this by doing three things:

1. Releasing ourselves from the grip of Resentment.

Ephesians 4:31 (niv) *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*

Resentment damages relationships and hurts the carrier more than the person it is held against!

....Resentment is worthless.

Job 5:2 (gnb) *To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do.*

Job 18:4a (niv) *You tear yourself to pieces in your anger....*

We've got to let go of our grudges and we can only **'IF'** we choose to forgive those who have wronged us just as God has forgiven us!

Ephesians 4:32 (niv) *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ god forgave you.*

....Forgiveness is not an emotion; it is a decision of the will!

Unforgiveness is like a cancerous growth, once discovered it needs to be cut out, otherwise it will spread and the results will be disastrous.

....Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude.

Matthew 18:21 (niv) *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"*

Every day we are candidates to be wronged against. The issue is **'not'** whether we get hurt or wounded! The issue is – **'ARE'** we going to forgive them?

Peter was stunned by Jesus' reply. **Matthew 18:22** (nkjv) *Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*

Jesus was hoping Peter (*and now us*) would develop a habit of forgiveness. (*See Mark 11:25; Colossians 3:13*)

2. It is ok to Mourn but not to Moan!

Grieving is a natural process in life.

Matthew 5:4 (niv) *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

Psalm 34:18 (niv) *The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Psalm 62:8 (niv) *Trust in Him at all times, O people, pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge.*

God wants to comfort us in our grief but we need to allow Him too.
We need to allow our feelings to be expressed and not suppress them.

To constantly moan will lead into self-pity.

Self-pity will block out those who want to help us. Self inflicted isolation!

Faith is not pretending everything is great in our lives when it isn't!
Faith is facing the facts, not getting discouraged and trusting in God!

...Accept what cannot be changed.

Job 11:13-16 (tlb) *Before you turn to God and stretch out your hands to Him, get rid of your sins and leave all iniquity behind you. Only then, without the spots of sin to defile you, can you walk steadily forward to God without fear. Only then can you forget your misery. It will all be in the past.*

Our past is behind us. The key to our peace of mind is through - **'acceptance'**.
Accept what cannot be changed. It relieves so much pain.

...We need to focus on what is left - not what is lost!

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (tlb) *Always be joyful. Always keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*

God doesn't expect us to be thankful for a disaster!
But we should be thankful for what's left - not what's lost!

Self-pity is damaging to our life because it perpetuates the pain long after the pain should be manageable.

3. Don't beat ourselves up because of Guilt.

Some people refuse to accept forgiveness from God. They hang on to their guilt. They lock themselves into a prison as if their paying for their own sins.

How do we let go of guilt?

There are two approaches to letting go of guilt.

They are both seen in two of the disciples - Peter and Judas.

The way Judas responded was with self condemnation - **Matthew 27:3-5** (nlt)

He committed suicide. That's the ultimate expression of self condemnation.

Peter's response was not condemnation but confession - **Matthew 26:75** (nlt)

Peter had the same remorse Judas did but he confessed his sin.

We let go of our guilt by ... Confessing it and giving it to God!

1 John 1:9 (niv) *If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Conclusion

Jesus was nailed to a cross so we can quit nailing ourselves to a cross.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (niv) *Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are past-away, behold all things are become new.*

The moment we commit our life to Christ, the slate is clean.

We do not have to live the rest of our life in a penalty box.

The choice is ours!