

This One Thing I Do

The great apostle Paul said, *“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).

Paul had Someone and something in view when the Holy Spirit generated these words into his soul and onto the pages of the inspired Word of God. Paul was very influential in establishing churches throughout

Asia minor. Therefore, it could be very feasible that many would have loved to see this man stay on and pastor any number of these churches. As you read the epistles of Romans, Colossians, Ephesians, First and Second Corinthians, and First and Second Thessalonians there can be no doubt that this servant of God could easily have been requested to dig his roots down in one locale and become a founder and main teacher in what would be comparable to our modern Bible Colleges and Seminaries. We also read in Scripture, *“And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers”* (Acts 18:3). From this passage, we surmise that Paul could have been a bi-vocational minister and given much of his energy in making tents and using his business acumen and financial profits to finance the work of God.

However, we see that Paul’s tent-making was only temporary until he could get on with the major call of God on his life. This then raises the question: what was Paul’s great gift? What was this one thing Paul was convinced that he must do?

Before we answer this question, we need to acknowledge that God has gifted everyone. The Bible says, *“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men”* (Ephesians 4:8). Three verses later, we see these words: *“And he gave some, apostles...”* (Ephesians 4:11). Paul had ability to pastor, teach or administrate as a successful businessman, but he was dedicated to the one great gift that God had given him. What was this one great gift God had given Paul? He was called to be an apostle. *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God”* (Romans 1:1). There are three aspects of the calling of an apostle: 1) He had to have seen the Lord. 2) He could be granted a temporary dispensational gift to scribe Scripture. 3) He was sent forth on a special mission. When we look at the root meaning of the word “apostle” we see it means “sent one.” So Paul understood his gift was to be sent forth. Specifically, his sending forth mission was explained by these words, *“Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation”* (Romans 15:20). Paul’s gift was to be sent to regions beyond the circumference of the Church. He was set on the fulfillment of this gift, even to the peril of imprisonment and ultimately his own life. As a matter of fact, he was imprisoned and eventually beheaded because he would not be dissuaded and stopped from carrying out his gift of apostleship.

Paul said, “...*But this one thing I do...*” (Philippians 3:13). What is the one thing God wants you to do? George W. Truett said, “Success, what is success? Success is finding the will of God for your life and doing it.” Let’s talk about finding and doing the one thing God has told us to do. What do we need to do?

1. Get Past Our Past.

In Philippians 3:13b, Paul said, “...*forgetting those things which are behind ...*”. The Devil is a master at taking our past sins and failures and attempt to make our future useless. We sometimes get under a guilt complex because we feel disqualified from serving the Lord because of things we have done, thoughts we have contemplated or words that we have said. We should pray regularly, “*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer*” (Psalm 19:14). Although this should be our aim, we should not give up because we have “blown it.” The truth is, we have all blown it and the truth is, we will continue to blow it from time-to-time. If the Devil cannot get us into sin, he will try to discourage us because of the errors we have made in the past. He will tell us that we are unworthy to be used of God.

Do you think Paul had nothing to overcome in his past? Listen to his testimony: “*And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities*” (Acts 22:4; 26:11). Paul was saying, “I persecuted people to death and I incarcerated the godliest people on the face of the earth. I pulled people from their places of worship, coercing them to blaspheme and I lived with this maddening anger toward those who named the name of Christ. Furthermore, I went out of my way to do this wicked activity!” When Paul got saved, many of the people didn’t trust him because of his past harming of the church. The Bible records the dilemma the Church was involved in with accepting and eventually allowing Paul into leadership in the very Church he persecuted. “*Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name*” (Acts 9:13,14). With this kind of pressure, what kept Paul going? Paul’s motivation was his knowledge of his forgiveness and he knew he was called and empowered by God to minister revealed truth: “*And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy...This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief*” (I Timothy 1:12,13,15). God said of Paul soon after his conversion: “...*he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*” (Acts 9:15). Paul embraced God’s call and got past his past.

2. Get Perfect in Our Pursuit.

Paul said in Philippians 3:13c: “...*reaching forth unto those things which are before.*” Paul had a whole new worldview! The past was forgiven and now a

bright new future was unfolding before him. His tomorrow was a clean, white page. Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, *“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”* The word perfect here is synonymous with mature, however I like the demand that the word perfect makes on our performance. One old saint, when asked, “How are you doing” would always respond, “Perfect.” Now we know on this side of heaven no one will ever attain sinless perfection, but perfection is a good goal. We will soon enter into the Olympics and you will hear commentators say a certain dive into water or a certain run was perfect. It is understood that an athlete has practiced until their performance is virtually perfect. Paul was able to reach forth in flawless performance because he had perfected himself in discipline. In his own words we read: *“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 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: 24-27). May these words inspire us to discipline ourselves so that the pursuit of God’s perfect will may be reached.

3. Get Pressured in Our Goal.

Paul said, *“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 3:13). The word “press” comes to us from a Greek word which means to exert strenuous effort against an opposing force. The prize is the high calling in Christ Jesus. For this to be obtained we must press toward the mark. The word “mark” is from the Greek word: “skopos.” Our English word for “scope” (like the zoom-scope on a rifle to hit the target) comes to us from this Greek word. The telescopic effect of the scope has the ability to bring the object of our focus into a closer perspective. We should be pressing against all opposition to bring the Lord Jesus into closer proximity. When Jesus is “zoomed in,” power will be available to do the one thing God wants us to do.

-Pastor Pope-