

“A New Start”

Philippians 3:12-14

Sunday, January 7, 2018

Introduction: The month of January is named after the Roman god Janus, who was depicted as a man with two faces. One face looked back. The other face looked forward. The face that looked back was one of sorrow and perplexity. The face that looked forward was one of hope and confidence.

In a sense, we are all like the Roman god Janus. We cannot help looking back and taking stock of the past year. There are lessons to learn. History is a great teacher. But we can't “camp-out” on the past. A new year is the time for a new start.

The Apostle Paul's words in our Scripture text tell us how to begin the new year with a new start.

Text: Philippians 3:12-14

1. Make an honest estimate of your present spiritual condition.

- The Apostle Paul did that.
- “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected” (3:12a).
- “I do not count myself to have apprehended” (3:13a).
- Paul was completely honest and dissatisfied with his present spiritual condition.

Application: A word of caution. Making an honest estimate of your present spiritual condition should not be a time of self-condemnation. There are two reasons why.

1. The fact that you are trying to make an honest estimate of your spiritual condition says that in your heart that you desire what God desires.

2. Condemnation is of the devil. The Bible says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus ...” (Romans 8:1).

Application: Be careful that honest self-evaluation does not turn into self-condemnation.

T.S. To begin a new year with a new start you must make an honest estimate of your spiritual condition, and forget the things which are behind you.

2. Forget the things which are behind you.

* Paul Said, “But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind” (3:13).

* Forgetting those things which are behind can be a struggle. For example, forgetting past sins can be a struggle.

Application: Any past sins that you have not confessed need to be confessed (1 John 1:9). Any past sins that have been confessed need to be put behind. What you do not put behind is the experience of forgiveness that you had. David is a good example to follow (Psalm 32:1).

Application: Past sins that you confessed need to be put behind, but the pain they brought needs to be remembered. David is an example (Psalm 32:3).

Application: Past sins that you have confessed need to be put behind, but the circumstances that led to the sins need to be remembered. Remembering the circumstances will be a guard to avoid the same mistake. David is a good example (2 Samuel 11:2; Psalm 101:2b,3a).

Application: Forgetting past failures can be a struggle. Past failures can make you afraid to attempt anything new.

Application: Forgetting past successes can be a struggle. Past successes can make you live now on what you have done or what you used to do.

T.S. To begin a new year with a new start you must make an honest estimate of your present spiritual condition, forget the things which are behind, and keep your eyes on the finish line.

3. Keep your eyes on the finish line.

* Paul said, "Reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal..." (3:13b-14).

* The picture is that of a runner whose eyes are on the finish line.

* Paul makes clear that the goal of every Christian should be "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14).

* The prize is the reward at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10).

Application: Throughout eternity you will carry with you the evidences of having been faithful or unfaithful here on earth.

Conclusion: Today is the perfect day to make a new start spiritually. The first Sunday in the year is the perfect time to start the new year with a new start.

Invitation: If you are not a Christian, a new start for you is to become a Christian. If you are not sure you are a Christian, a new start for you is to settle your salvation. If you are a Christian and need a church home, a new start for you is to join the church.