

IN THE MARGINS: Letting go and pressing forward

By Tony Martin

Editor

Let's talk about the past for a minute – because it has a way of sticking around, doesn't it? We've all been there, replaying old mistakes, regrets, or even the "good ol' days" like they're a greatest hits album. But here's the thing: to press into your future, you need to forget the past.

Now, before you start thinking I mean some Jedi mind trick where you just *erase* bad memories or pretend they never happened, let me clarify. Forgetting, in the way we usually think about it, is passive. It's like saying, "Oops, I forgot where I put my keys!" The more you try to force yourself to forget something, the more your brain latches onto it. Ever tried not to think about chocolate cake while you're on a diet? Yeah, same idea.

But here's the game-changer: when the Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 3:13-14, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus," he's not talking about passive forgetting. The original Greek word for "forgetting" is better understood as *neglecting*. And that's a whole different mindset.

Neglecting means actively choosing not to give something the time, energy, or attention it needs to thrive. Think of it like a plant. If you stop watering it, stop putting it in the sunlight, stop nurturing it, what happens? It withers. It dies. The same is true for our past. When it comes calling, you don't have to answer. You don't have to give it what it needs to stick around. Instead, you redirect your focus – your

time, your energy, your prayers – toward the future God has for you.

Why Do We Cling to the Past?

Let's get real for a second. A lot of us live with one foot in the past and the other in the present, wondering why we feel stuck. Maybe you're holding on to the glory days – the time when life was simpler, your kids were little, or your career was thriving. Or maybe you're stuck in a loop of regret, replaying that one moment when everything went wrong.

Why do we do this? Because it's *comfortable*. Even if the past is painful, at least it's familiar. The future, on the other hand, is unknown, uncertain, and sometimes downright scary. It's like driving down a highway while staring in the rearview mirror – you know you're supposed to look ahead, but something keeps pulling your gaze back.

Neglecting the Past When It Comes Calling

So, how do we neglect the past when it keeps showing up? First, recognize that you don't have to fight it head-on. The goal isn't to wage war on old memories or emotions but to starve them by investing in something better – your future.

Isaiah 43:18-19 gives us a powerful reminder: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" God is always doing something new, but you can't see it if you're too busy looking back.

This doesn't mean you ignore the lessons your past has taught you. It's important to acknowledge where you've been and how God has brought you through. But it does mean refusing to let the past define your present or limit your future.

Where's Your Focus?

Here's a question worth asking yourself: Are you spending more

time wishing for life to be like it was, or are you pressing forward into what could be?

It's easy to get stuck in "if only" thinking. *If only I hadn't made that mistake. If only I had more money. If only I could go back and change things.* But here's the truth: your "if only" is robbing you of what's possible. You can't change the past, but you can shape the future by how you choose to live today.

That's why Paul's words are so powerful. He wasn't perfect (and he'd be the first to tell you that), but he understood the value of focus. Straining toward the future takes effort – it's intentional, it's active, and sometimes it's hard. But it's worth it.

Pressing On

So, how do we press on? Start by giving your future what it needs to thrive. Spend time in prayer, asking God to reveal His plans for you. Take small, intentional steps toward the dreams He's placed in your heart. Surround yourself with people who encourage you to grow. And when the past comes knocking, remind yourself that you don't live there anymore.

God's best for you isn't behind you – it's ahead. So, neglect the past, invest in the future, and press on toward the prize He has for you. It won't always be easy, but it will always be worth it.

Until next time, keep looking ahead, y'all!