

## HOLIDAY MESSAGES 2020

### STUDY FIVE

## Here's Something Worth Forgetting

*Philippians 3:4–14*

*All of us look back today to a year that has almost passed. Just a few hours and it's over. It's a good thing to remember what has been beneficial. It's healthy to forget those things that drag us down. Things that need to be forgotten. Things that we sought for our own glory and our own recognition.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**T**HE ancient Greek philosopher Socrates once said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” This pithy aphorism has ringed true throughout the halls of history into every room of culture, no matter the culture.

First, no one steps foot into this world perfect in stature. We journey from zygote to embryo to fetus to infant to toddler to adolescent to adult. As maturing creatures, we need guidance, education, and correction. Self-examination that leads to self-correction is a character trait that displays one's natural maturity.

Second, no one steps foot into this world perfect in nature. As fallen creatures, we require discipline and reproof—instruction for what to think and not to think, to say and not to say, to do and not to do. We need training in righteousness and truth. Self-examination that leads to self-correction is a godly trait that displays one's spiritual maturity.

The end of a year provides all people the perfect time for self-examination. To do this effectively, one must look behind *and* ahead, forget *and* remember, evaluate *and* plan.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study and the next, we will do just that. In the next, we'll look ahead, remember, and plan. For now, we'll focus upon divine insights for forgetting what lies behind so we can press on in the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## Here's Something Worth Forgetting

*Philippians 3:4–14*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

The apostle Paul emphasized the need to examine oneself. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, he wrote:

*Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.*

Specifically, Paul enjoined us to examine ourselves to discern whether we're true followers of Christ. Broadly, Paul testified to the basic need of self-reflection to assist in our spiritual growth. In Psalm 139, David testified to the Lord's provision of His strength and help for our self-reflection.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
Point out anything in me that offends you,  
and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (Psalm 139:23–24)*

Notice the desired outcome of self-reflection: walking in the path of everlasting life—full of peace and joy and fellowship in the Holy Spirit (see Romans 14:17).

Considering the verses above, begin the process of self-reflection. Meditate on those verses. Quiet your mind and set your heart toward God. Invite Him into this study and ask Him to bless your time in His Word.

*I'm grateful for this transition that comes annually. It's a natural time for us to pause and examine ourselves. By the way, when we examine ourselves, we discover things no one else knows. We dig into the secrets of our lives we've never shared. We acknowledge habits that we've begun to form, that quite likely no one else has noticed; and the self-examination is profitable. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Often, Satan plants seeds of deception, distraction, or persecution shortly after the Spirit plants a local church. We observe this diabolical tactic used against the church in Philippi. In Philippians 3, Paul opened with a word of warning against legalists who taught that a true Christian must adhere to religious regulations. *FALSE!* The gospel isn't faith *plus* works. Only faith.

Irritated, Paul called these false teachers “dogs.” They exchanged true, Christ-centered assurance and joy for rule-following confidence and self-flattery. But such confidence stood on cardboard and spiritually satisfies about as much as eating cardboard. Such confidence rests upon our feeble efforts instead of Christ's achievement.

Spiritual confidence rests elsewhere. Look at what Paul said in his letter to the Philippian church:

*For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.* (Philippians 3:3 NASB)

According to this verse, what three ways does true Christianity differ from legalism?

Next, Paul expands upon the meaning of Philippians 3:3 in 3:4–14. There, we find the spiritual secret to forgetting what lies behind.



### Observation: Counting All Things as Loss

Good observation notices contrasts—at the sentence level as well as the structural level.<sup>1</sup> In Philippians 3:4–14, Paul contrasts his own religious credentials (of which he could have boasted but didn't) with God's free gift in Christ.



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### Paul's Credentials

Observe *Philippians 3:4–6*. List the seven attributes and possessions Paul could have boasted in.

A true Hebrew of the Hebrews. Gifted and zealous, Paul likely stood in Israel's hall of fame at a young age. Then, with one look at the risen Lord, it all faded into the background. Paul goes on to say, "I once thought these things were valuable, BUT NOW" (*Philippians 3:7*, emphasis added). Let's explore the spiritual weight behind that simple transition.

### Christ's Value

Observe *Philippians 3:7–14*. According to 3:7–9, how did Paul classify his former credentials, and what did he count as more valuable than them, spiritually speaking?

Legalism promises a spiritual reward for the efforts of self-accomplishment. According to 3:10–11, how did God's provision in Christ redirect Paul's spiritual efforts?



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What drove Paul's spiritual efforts according to 3:12–14? What role did "forgetting" play in Paul's pursuits?

Certainty of victory impelled Paul's race toward the finish line. He could run his course with joy knowing that, in Christ, he had a guaranteed win. Paul could have stayed stuck—maintaining the predictability of religious regulation and finding security in legalistic misery. But he forgot all that. Christ gives sinew to our spiritual legs so we can run freely, unchained by the past.

*Stop the bad habit of longing for things and for your own life to be as it has been, and start anticipating and focusing on the way things could be and should be through Christ.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Interpretation: Forgetting the Past, Looking Ahead

Now, we'll go deeper. We'll consider what fueled Paul to forget the past so that he could press on. Don't forget to turn to your trusted Bible study *resources* in this section. You may want to grab Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *commentary* on Philippians. *Commentaries* elucidate key events, ideas, and cultural norms to aid our understanding of what was written so many ages ago.

First, explain what Paul meant when he referred to the calling of God in Christ in Philippians 3:14 (hint: refer to 3:11).



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Second, explain how Paul pursued that calling. Paul expressed “forgetting” as one method of pursuit (Philippians 3:13). Forgetting *what*, exactly? What did Paul actively pursue (see 3:10–11)?

How would Paul have missed Christ's call, and participation in the power of that call, had he relied on his own credentials?

*Before Saul became Paul, Saul was all about Saul—all about what he did, all about what he accomplished, all about his record, all about his deeds—until he found righteousness in Christ that could never be earned. What a difference! Saul became Paul: “That I might come to know Him better and better, deeper and deeper. That is my drive in life. And that I might know the mighty power that raised Him from the dead, and even suffer alongside Him as He once suffered. I live for that.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### Correlation: Head Forward

Jesus, in just a single sentence, gave a simple illustration similar to that of Paul's. Observe and interpret *Luke 9:62* and explain how it correlates with the main passage of our study.

All the gifts, privileges, responsibilities, and possibilities of kingdom life overshadow our past. The best way we can love our family and friends, the best way we can perform our vocation, the best way we can contribute to society . . . it all comes by embracing all that God has for us as members of His kingdom.



### Application: Pastor Chuck's Five Insights for Pressing On

As a reflection upon Paul's vital teaching for pursuing the heavenly prize promised by Jesus' call, Pastor Chuck offers five useful guidelines to help you in your spiritual journey.

- 1) *God's plan is progress, not perfection.* In this life, we keep our feet moving in the right direction, one day at a time, despite our own limitations and imperfections.
- 2) *The past is over; leave it behind.* Living in the past is a complete waste of energy. Don't rehash your woes or bask in former glory. Press on!
- 3) *The future offers fresh hope; look forward to it.* In the race of life, run! Embrace it—lean into it!
- 4) *The secret is a determined attitude; maintain it.* Hold a “never-say-die” mentality. Let the Spirit fortify your resolve to persevere.
- 5) *The commitment is ongoing; stay at it.* Don't drift along in the winds of time or waver in the storms of woe. Jesus' promise is sure. His presence is near. His strength is sufficient.



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Which of these guidelines proves most relevant to you in your season of life? Why? How have you been encouraged and challenged in this study to forget the past and press on in the year ahead? How do you plan to implement just one core principle that you learned?

We've just spent time soaking in all the divine insights that saturate Paul's passage in Philippians 3:4–14. You have learned what to forget. As you grow and mature in your walk with Jesus, remember to "hold on to the progress [you] have already made" (Philippians 3:16).



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for giving me a race that is truly worth running. Thank You for giving me something ahead that is truly worth looking at and pressing toward. Thank You for raising me up in Christ on wings like eagles. In Him, I can take the next step. For His glory, I will keep moving. In the strong name of Christ, I pray, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. To review Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](https://sts.insight.org) or grab a *copy* of the book for your library. Pastor Chuck also uses *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. It's one of his favorite Bible study tools.

