

THE LURE OF YESTERDAY  
Gal. 2:11-<sup>14</sup>~~21~~ and Phil. 3:13-14

All of us face the danger of dwelling too much on the past.

Yesterday can be a trap.

It was for Peter, as in Gal. 2:11-~~21~~<sup>14</sup>

(Review the story).

Why do so many dwell too much on yesterday?

*was Durant...*

I. Possibly because it is so familiar.

A. People prefer the familiar and the known rather than the unknown.

B. Most cautious travelers prefer to go several miles out of their way to follow a familiar route, than to take a chance on some professed new short cut or better Interstate Highway.

C. Our spiritual patterns follow the same lines.

D. Paul in Phil. 3:13-14 wrote of forgetting the things which are behind.

Of course, we need to forget the sins, mistakes, failures, and defeats of the past -- after they have been confessed and repented of and forgiven by the infinite mercy and grace of God.

Once an eight-year-old boy was rude one night at church to an adult. When his mother learned about this, she made her son call and apologize. After many tears and much anguish, the young fellow dialed the number.

The conversation from the boy's end of the line was brief, "Mr smith, I am sorry..." He listened but said not another word, while tears streamed down his face, until he finally said, "Thank you," and hung up. Turning to his mother, he said, "Before I could even finish my apology, he forgave me."

That's the way it is with God. We don't even get out all of our confession before his forgiveness begins to flow into our hearts. If we are truly penitent, immediately as we start to confess, his spirit works within us, and his forgiveness brings us joy and peace.

That's the only time we need to look back on yesterday -- just to confess our sins and ask God's forgiveness, and leave the rest with Him.

We might paraphrase Paul in these words:  
"I try to forget about yesterday, and I reach forward to what lies ahead tomorrow, as I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

II. Another reason why Yesterday is a lure for us is that it seldom offends or disturbs anyone in our circle.

A. Few people are offended or disturbed by our old traditions held from "long ago."

B. But if we are going to meet the needs of tomorrow, we must make changes TODAY. and that is uncomfortable.

C. The church must change if it is going to win this generation and the next one. *It may need to:*

1. Change goals and objectives
2. Change its structure & organization
3. Change its programs and ministries
4. Change its public relations and promotion
5. Change its budgeting, staffing, & priorities
6. " " attitudes toward people
7. " " willingness to select, enlist,

train, disciple, and utilize <sup>the available</sup> new leadership who will support the church, put aside their own <sup>personal</sup> ~~pet~~ <sup>agenda</sup> ~~opinions~~, and work unitedly only for the glory of God in this congregation.

> Easier to blame others... (Supp. 2)

III. Yesterday can so easily be a lure, moreover, because it costs nothing.

A. Yesterday demands nothing of today -- no struggle, no discipline.

B. Peter's relapse into yesterday at Antioch did not cost him anything at the moment.

Until challenged by Paul, he was able to maintain a pleasant friendship with everyone. Had Peter graciously, but firmly insisted upon fellowship and love for the gentile Christians, it might well have cost him some long and close relationships with many Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.



*"restraining forward to what lies ahead... Phil. 3:13*

C. We need a future orientation.

1. There is an old saying that, "He who lives only in his memories is really old."

2. People or churches can become so absorbed in memories, that they miss the joy of living TODAY.

3. The Bible is future oriented; so should WE be.

4. A future hope can help overcome pessimism.

5. Creative people who are oriented to the future live longer and enjoy a greater sense of meaning and purpose than those who fall a victim to the lure of yesterday.

Golda Meir became the prime minister of Israel at seventy-one.

Konrad Adenauer was first elected chancellor of West Germany at seventy-three and served for fourteen years.

Amos Alonzo Stagg was forced to retire at seventy as football coach at the University of Chicago, but he wasn't ready to retire, and he coached for fourteen more years at the University of the Pacific and was voted coach of the year at eighty-one.

Grandma Moses began painting at seventy-nine and was still painting beautiful folk art at 100.

Goethe wrote Faust when he was eighty.

John Wesley preached until he was eighty-eight.

At 83 Gladstone was elected prime minister of Great Britain for the fourth time.

Arthur Rubinstein was still making concert tours at 85. And the list goes on and on.

IV. The Lure of Yesterday is often an excuse for taking life easy in the course of least resistance.

A. Some say, "I've served my time. I just want to take it easy and not worry about today or tomorrow. I'm happy to live the rest of my life in yesterday."

B. Peter's greatness was shown by his willingness to acknowledge his mistake and to change from his habits of yesterday.

C. He respected the rebuke of his colleague Paul.

D. He was sensitive to the promptings of his own conscience. That is a sign of true greatness.

E. He broke the lure of yesterday and became the great Apostle of God's Tomorrow.

## THE LURE OF YESTERDAY

Supp. notes  
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INTRO: William Durant, the very successful founder of General Motors, said, "Forget mistakes. Forget failures. Forget everything except what you're going to do now and do it. Today is your lucky day."

II. C. We christians must be very careful when we talk about "building a church." We must be clear that we are NOT speaking about constructing a physical building. We are, rather, building MEN AND WOMEN, YOUNG PEOPLE, BOYS AND GIRLS, in SPIRITUAL MATURITY.

Too many churches have what is called an "edifice complex," wherein the importance and success of the church is directly measured by the size and grandeur of the structure itself. Such christians find it uncomfortable and humbling to try to worship in a temporary and improvised place.

Many immature christians of yesterday acted and talked like they believed the mission of the church to be one or more of the following: to elect certain politicians, or to fight pornography and abortion, to defend a certain creed or list of doctrines, or to oppose world-wide oppression, or to establish a political democracy. Others act like it should be the mission of the modern church to make the worship of God exciting to human emotions, to go head-to-head with the Hollywood and MTV style of entertainment, or to make sure that the financial income grows each year, and that the statistics on new members and baptisms and Sunday School attendance go up annually, or to keep surprising the people with novel programs, speakers, music, drama, or whatever. It is as if we need to reinvent the wheel and learn by tragic experience from the mistakes that other groups of christians have made during the last 20 centuries.

When will we ever learn what the Corinthian church had to accept: that is, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, or fleshly, but spiritual"?

Chuck Colson, in his new book, The Body, writes that "It's no surprise that nonbelievers don't



really know much about the church's identity or mission. But when christians themselves are undergoing a widespread identity crisis, then we are in BIG TROUBLE" (p. 30).

D. It's much easier to blame others than it is to get to work patiently and cooperatively with others to get the job done.

This reminds me of the story of a woman who stood inside of the front door of their house, her arms full of coats. Four small children scurried around her. Her husband, coming down the stairs, asked why she was just standing there.

"Here," she said, handing him the coats. "This time YOU put the children into their coats, and I'll go HONK THE HORN!"

Somehow, we usually find it's much easier to criticize, blame, and find fault, than it is to pitch in and help others who are doing their very best to accomplish the common task.

III. B. Peter was trying to play the part of a good politician at Antioch.

Have you heard about the latest dance craze? It's called the Politician's Polka. You take one step forward, two steps back—and sidestep the issue!

But christians just can't sidestep some things, things like how you are to treat your fellow christian brothers and sisters, whether you are going to accept their experience of faith in Christ, and whether you are going to fellowship with them.

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