

Washington church of Christ

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The Washington Messenger

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February 23, 2014

Order of Services Sunday February 23, 2014

Song Leader	Derald Sanchez
Prayer	Bob Celentano
Preaching	Bob James
Lord's Supper	
Prayer for the Bread	Stan Thompson
Prayer for the Cup	Pete Ferencze
Prayer for the Collection	Tom Dolan
Assisting at the Table	Glenn Montgomery
Scripture Reading	Bob James
Morning Closing Prayer	Cameron Wydro
Evening Opening Prayer	Ralph Ruggiero
Announcements	Brian Jeffries

Schedule of Weekly Services

Sunday Morning Bible Classes	9:30 am
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 am
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening Bible Classes	7:30 pm
Thursday Morning Bible Study	11:00 am

Leaving the Past and Moving On...

It's been said that there are three kinds of people in this world ... those who **make** things happen, those who **watch** things happen, and those who **wonder what** happened. Most endeavor to be in the first group, and having set goals and objectives they live each day working to "make things happen". This is in general a good thing ... however there is the need to at regular intervals evaluate our progress to insure we are in fact achieving our desired objective.

The apostle Paul compared living the Christian life to running a race...

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NIV)

Here he calls attention to his own conduct and talks of his focus, and pains taking efforts, to keep himself on the proper track and headed in the proper direction. I think it is implied here that to live the Christian life effectively requires effort ... and this effort may from time to time involve personal recalibration and a course correction.

There will be times where our efforts reward us with the gratification that comes from knowing that we are "on course" ... and, at other times we might experience the frustration and dismay associated with mistake and failure.

Both of these emotional experiences present dangers that need to be recognized and avoided. And, it seems to me that the latter is more dangerous to our progress than the former. In those times when we realize our inadequacies and failures, should sin be involved, after sought forgiveness and reconciliation to God, we should strive to *leave the past, and move on.*

In writing to the church in Philippi, Paul again used himself as an example of effective Christian living when he said...

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14 NKJV)

Considering the context of this passage it sort of sounds like a disclaimer ... Paul had just extolled many positive things about his own life with the intention of showing that in the flesh he had more in which he could have boasted than any of the Judaizers of that day. And, it is obvious that Paul did not want the Christians there to misunderstand what he had just said in as much as he, of all people, was aware of how far below the possible glory God had in store for all Christians he was.

I feel an application for us today is that the Christian life is a journey, a process of growth in which we seek to "lay hold" of the fullness of that which has been given us, or as Paul stated it ... "*that for which I was also laid hold of by Christ.*" (Philippians 3:12). Every day, then, we begin where we are ... claiming boldly and confidently that Christ has made us new creatures, but confessing humbly that we have not become fully what He wants us to be. As Christians we make no claim to perfection, but we have an unshakable confidence that Jesus, the Christ, has made us His own.

After acknowledgment of who we are, and recognition of where we are along our Christian journey, it may become necessary for us to leave the past behind in our quest to keep moving forward.

I don't think Paul is saying that he did not regard the proper observation of the past life as useful and profitable for a Christian ... he exhorted the church in Ephesus to "remember" (Ephesians 2:11-12). His point is that he would not allow any reference to the past to interfere with the one great effort to win the prize.

As Christians we are drawn by the powerful desire of a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and we are uniquely equipped to leave the past behind. Yet, how many of us do not. A dimension of our past that can continue to drag us back, weigh us down, and make our movement haphazard at best, is our sense of failure, our guilt over past sin, our pain from past hurts. Doesn't this inability to leave the past behind contradict everything we confess about the healing, forgiving, redeeming power of God?

It may be profitable for us as Christians to remind ourselves of the past mercies of God to us. This recognition should evoke emotions of gratitude in our hearts. And, thinking of our shortcomings and errors should produce penitence and humility. But none of these things should be allowed for one moment to divert the mind from our ultimate purpose of life ... to win the *incorruptible* crown.

Albert Barnes writes, "He is the most cheerful Christian who looks onward, and who keeps heaven always in view; he who is accustomed much to dwell on the past, though he may be a true Christian, will be likely to be melancholy and dispirited, to be a recluse rather than a warm-hearted and active friend of the Saviour. Or if he looks backward to contemplate what he has done - the space that he has run over - the difficulties which he has surmounted - and his own rapidity in the race, he will be likely to become self-complacent and self-satisfied. He will trust his past endeavors, and feel that the prize is now secure, and will relax his future efforts."

Let us then be forward looking ... not spending our time either in brooding the gloomy past, and our own unfaithfulness, or in thinking of what we have accomplished our objectives such that we become puffed up with self-complacency.

Let us keep our eyes steadfastly on the prize ... *leaving the past, and always moving on!*

Our Prayer List...

For Spiritual Responsiveness – All of our wayward members

For Physical Healing – Jordan Thomas ... Matt Grimaldi ... John Baxter ... Britta Commans ... Everett Guyton

For Wisdom and Good Judgment – The Leaders of our congregation ... the leaders of our nation

For God's Care and Good Providence – Our young people away at college ... Our young people here at Washington ... our members who are traveling ... the men and women in military service ... our congregation.

The Evangelist and Teachers We Help Support – Jon Focht – Tim Bunting – Scott Smelser – Dan Wydro

EVENTS AND NOTES

UPCOMING EVENTS THAT WE ARE AWARE OF ARE ...

- ▲ THE NEXT BIBLE CLASS TERM STARTS ON SUNDAY MARCH 9TH, FOCUSING ON ***THE DIVIDED KINGDOM***. THE TEACHERS WILL BE TOM, ANNIE, AND STAN.
- ▲ THE UPPER WEST MANHATTAN CONGREGATION WILL HOST THEIR SPRING GOSPEL LECTURE SERIES ON MARCH 15-16, 2014. SCOTT SMELSER WILL PRESENT THE LESSONS.
- ▲ OUR SPRING GOSPEL MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 25TH – 27TH WITH PHIL ROBERTSON.
- ▲ BOB AND ANNIE ARE SCHEDULED TO BE AT WEST POINT ON NEXT SUNDAY MORNING. ARNOLD WILL BE GIVING THE MORNING LESSON.
- ▲ MONTHLY UPDATES FROM THE EVANGELISTS THAT WE ASSIST ARE POSTED ON THE BULLETIN BOARD.