

Straining Forward

by Edwin L. Crozier

Can you believe it? Another new year. 2016 is closed. There is not a single solitary thing we can do about it. We can't change any of the mistakes. We can't erase any of the sins. We can't improve any of the shortcomings. We can't unsay what we said. We can't undo what we did. That book is shut.

But 2017 is just beginning. A new year with no mistakes in it yet. Well...at least not many. How many mistakes could we have made in just the first 8 hours? What dreams do you have for this year? What resolutions have you made? What changes are you making? What improvements are you planning?

It almost seems like Paul wrote **Philippians 3:12-14** for days just like this one in which we are considering our past and our future.

"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (ESV).

Certainly, I hope you learn from 2016. Paul isn't saying we should forget and abandon any lessons we learned from either our mistakes or our successes in the past. However, there is no sense dwelling in what happened in 2016. You did some bad things. But you are saved by Jesus Christ. There is no sense in living in your past sins. Some bad things likely happened to you. There is no sense dwelling in your depression based on the past. You did some good things. That is great. But don't rest on your laurels of the past, keep moving forward.

I know it is cliché, but today really is the first day of the rest of your life. You are where you are today because of the choices you made yesterday (per Stephen Covey). But you will be where you will be on January 1, 2018 because of the choices you start making today. Let me help you with your first choice. Close the book on 2016. Don't live in it. Don't dwell in the past. Forget what lies behind. Instead, start straining forward today. Look to what lies ahead.

Fellowship with God is ahead of you. Heavenly perfection is ahead of you. Glorious eternity in the resurrection is ahead of you. Reach forward for that. Let that impact how you will behave today. Like Paul, you are not perfect, but you are purchased. You have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. Let that change you today. Let that wash your past away and focus you on what lies ahead. Connect with others who are straining forward and encourage one another to reach for Jesus and His resurrection. Cut off everything that gets in the way of your straining forward. Get away from everyone who would pull you back. Strain forward. What is ahead is what matters now.