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Here's Hope  
by Rev. Jerry Rea

### The Rear View Mirror

There is a decided forward-looking tone to Biblical Christianity. Paul testified that he was pressing toward the mark (Phil. 3:12-14). Furthermore, he said he was forgetting what was behind and striving forward; pressing on. I wonder what he was "forgetting." Was he forgetting his failures and sins? Did he mean to forget all the accolades of being a Pharisee? After all, he had achieved much in the realm of spiritual hierarchy. These are both positive and negative. Regardless of what Paul was referring to, the principle remains. Forget what is behind and press on to what lies ahead.

I find in these verses powerful advice for... just living. You see, all of us have things we need to forget. Senior adults have to forget all their achievements and success, or they live in the past. Those of us who make regular mistakes need to leave those behind as well. Some might need to put behind them a period of time in which they were married, but it didn't work out. There are times we might come to grips with our "other" life, reminding ourselves that all that time is over. Saying, "I used to," gets to be a habit, and it is usually a bad habit. The problem is that you are constantly looking in the rear view mirror. At times we don't just *look* there, we begin to *live* there. It is wonderful to remember, but it cannot become a lifestyle. Someone said it this way. The past is not supposed to be an anchor to hold us back, but a rudder to guide us forward.

Here's a reminder. All that is gone. It could have been bad, and it could've been good, but either way, it's gone. That other marriage, well, it's gone. That other better paycheck, that too is gone. Those friends, who were always around then, are not as close any more. The health that you enjoyed may be gone. The culture that you lived in does no longer exist. The days of Dick and Jane playing with Spot on the front lawn have gone and since faded. If you live there (and you'd have to do that in your mind), then you are living focused on the rear view mirror.

Paul "pressed on." He said this one thing I do. It was a singular principle with which to live. He had but one focus and it wasn't backward. He wasn't thinking about the last church he started but the one he wanted to start. He wasn't whining about the good-ole-days in the Sanhedrin because he'd found better days in God's gospel.

Let me point out a few advantages of pressing on. *First*, you will find yourself following Jesus. Jesus is not way back there, He is way up there. To follow anyone or anything means you are looking forward where they are and falling in behind. Jesus is out front. He is leading places you've never been to, heights you've never climbed... yet. *Another* advantage of pressing forward is that you'll find yourself thinking about, praying about and working for this new vision of what could be, or what will be. Visions are always forward. They are out front exciting us, challenging us and drawing us on. Without a vision (for your own personal life) you'll wind up wandering and confused and often lost. It's exciting to experience whatever God has for you as you follow, but following is forward. *Last* but not least, there is the advantage of renewed optimism. We often call this one hope. I've found that we can be hopeful, or helpless. We can expect better things, or we can get mired in hard and harsh realities of the day to day. You will experience bad things, but you could experience them as a stepping stone to good things. God has wonderful plans for you, at whatever stage of life you find yourself. Press forward and live them!

"This One Thing I Do"  
Jerry Rea