



Links Players

FORGETTING THE PAST

...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. (Philippians 3: 13 -14, ESV)

One of the more difficult things to do in the game of golf is forgetting a bad hole. Usually, self-talk fails. Clichés rarely help. Your caddie says, “Shake it off.” Your partner whispers, “Put it behind you.” You mentally rehearse all the motivational books you’ve read. But forgetting a disastrous hole is tough business.

Let’s say you are in tournament play and begin your round with a string of pars followed by back-to-back birdies. You are on top of the world. You are under par and are feeling it. Your confidence is sky high! You are dialed in.

You step up to the next tee—a par four—peg it, get behind the ball, choose an aggressive line, and step into your shot; wham—you push it out of bounds. You re-tee, and go through your motions; bang—unintentionally, you’ve overcompensated. You’ve snipe-hooked it into the creek running down the left side of the fairway.

You start counting in your head—“one out, two back in, three into the water, four to get it back into play.” Now you find yourself hitting your fifth shot from one hundred and eighty-nine yards to a well-bunkered, elevated green that would make Donald Ross blush. You gather yourself but airmail the green. After a chunked wedge, you find the dance floor only to three putt.

You walk off the green mumbling something to yourself about a “ten or was it an eleven.” Miserable, you re-count and determine it was a ten. To make matters worse, your buddy yells out, “What did you make?” Inarticulately, you announce it was a “sextuple bogey.”

You think, What just happened? I was two under par through seven holes of play. Now I am four over! Making every effort to think about the next hole, all the thoughts from the previous debacle come rushing back: that first ball sailing over the pines, the provisional snipe hooked into the creek, the chunked wedge, and the three putt!

Forgetting our past failures is not unlike forgetting a bad hole. Memories can be stubborn that way. They tend to haunt us. Many times, the herculean efforts to forget only serve to intensify memories from the dark chapters of our lives. Like a bad song we cannot get out of our head, memories of past failures lurk.

After recounting his past failures to attain right standing with God through obedience to the Law, Paul goes on to rejoice in the right-standing gifted to him from Christ’s perfect righteousness — a righteousness received by faith.

Paul’s past failures were many. And as great as the gift of righteousness is, Paul will not stop there. By faith, he sees a future gift—the “upward call” (Phil. 3: 10-14). What was this upward call? It’s a call to a resurrected, immortal body like his Savior’s.

Let’s forget our past failures! Let’s rejoice that Christ has forgiven us! Like the Prodigal Son, let us rejoice that the Father has clothed us in the robes of Christ’s righteousness. Let us set our sights on the future of our immortal bodies in a new heaven and a new earth.

Prayer – Jesus, wash our consciences clean from past failures and past efforts of achieving right standing with you through moral self-effort.

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