

Remembering - Short Term Memory Loss

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. (Philippians 3:14-14, ESV)

Some sports psychologists refer to it as “Short Term Memory Loss.” Granted, in normal situations, this can be utterly frustrating. In golf, however, forgetfulness can be a positive trait.

Learning to forget a bad shot, swing, or hole mid-round is essential if we hope to go forward with good play. Several sports psychologists have noted that “Jack Nicklaus was famous for his ‘short-term memory loss.’”

Of course, this advice falls woefully short of all we could say about negative moments in golf. In the moment, forgetting poor execution before approaching your next shot is critically important. However, in post-round reflections, refusing to learn from a poor shot is short-sighted.

Supposing you are like most golfers, you mentally rehearse your round after the fact, calling to mind what went right and what went wrong. Remembering what went wrong and drilling down in search of why it happened is a good habit.

Perhaps your tempo was out of sorts. As David Feherty once quipped, maybe “you lunged before you lurched.” Perchance, you attempted a shot that falls well outside your wheelhouse. Whatever the reason, in post-round reconnaissance, remembering the moment, while painful, can be instructive.

Ironically, when Paul says, “forgetting what lies behind,” he is not erasing his past; rather, he contrasts his new life in Christ with his former life in Judaism. In brief, Paul is not “forgetting” previous moral infidelities.

Rather, Paul is reassessing his previous achievements in light of knowing Christ. He recalls his pedigree, education, conformity to the Mosaic Covenant, and zeal. After converting to Christ, he designates all his accomplishments as “skubala” (Greek for garbage, rubbish, even dung).

Formerly, he depended on his morality, Abrahamic heritage, and zeal for the Mosaic Covenant to be accepted by Yahweh. After his conversion to Christ, he relies entirely upon the gift of righteousness given in exchange for faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

As it turns out, depending on religious, moral, and personal accomplishments, to find acceptance with The Almighty is wrongheaded.

Rather than presenting ourselves before the throne of God, relying on who we are and what we have done, we “worship by the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus [alone], and put no confidence in the flesh (our heritage, our religious zeal, or our achievements)— see Philippians 3:3.

We live in an age and culture that places ultimate value on performance. From one angle, of course, this is entirely appropriate. After all, we don’t tee it up to lose.

Yet, when it comes to getting right with God, we affirm with the hymn writer: “Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Thy cross, I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace: Foul, I to the fountain fly, Wash me Savior or I die.”

Prayer: Father! Show me where I depend on anything other than Christ Jesus for my standing before you.

READING: Philippians 3:1-16

1. Recall times when your inability to forget a previous bad shot, hole, or swing cost you the round. Relive with your Links Fellowship and have a good laugh or cry.

2. Paul is contrasting his former life in Judaism with his new life in Christ. What were those things he once relied on to be right with God? How does he view them now? What three marks identify those who trust Christ (see verse 3)?

3. Practically speaking, what are you tempted to trust in other than Christ to commend yourself to God?
