

LOOKING BACK

Text: Philippians 3:12-14.

Delivered on: November 11, 2012. Streetsboro.

INTRODUCTION.

1. Earlier this year, the college football season opened with the University of Michigan playing Alabama.
2. Michigan was beaten badly. 41-14.
3. After the game, coach Brady Hoke said, "The important thing is that we can't let Alabama beat us twice. This is a week where we will learn about our team's leadership and our motivation. There are only 11 more guaranteed opportunities for University of Michigan football games, so we have to learn from what happened in Dallas and start focusing on Air Force this weekend."
4. Wide receiver, Devin Gardner said, "I haven't looked at every defense we play, but they have got to be the best. I learned more in that game than I've learned in all the practices I've had since starting to play wide receiver. That's the important thing. We don't just want to forget this happened -- we need to learn from this and apply the lessons to Air Force. We can't let one team beat us twice."
5. In these comments we see two important facts.
 - a. Michigan wanted to learn from their mistakes and get better.
 - b. Then they wanted to move on and not allow Alabama to "beat them twice."
6. In other words, once they had analyzed the game and learned all they could, they wanted to forget about it and move on.
7. As Christians, we must do the same thing.

BODY.

I. IT IS BENEFICIAL TO LEARN FROM THE PAST.

- A. We can learn from other's mistakes. *1 Corinthians 10:1-13*. Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, **2** all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, **3** all ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. **5** But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. **6** Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. **7** And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." **8** Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; **9** nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; **10** nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. **11** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. **12** Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. **13** No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.
 1. Notice that in verse 6, we are told that what happened to Israel was an example to us.
 2. Notice that in verse 11, we are told that these things were written for OUR admonition.
 3. Their failures, and their subsequent punishment, should teach us...
 - a) Not to lust after evil things. (v.6)
 - b) Not to become idolaters. (v.7)
 - c) Not to commit sexual immorality. (v.8)
 - d) Not to tempt Christ. (v.9)
 - e) Not to complain. (v.10)
 - f) Not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. (v.12)
 4. The Old Testament and history in general are full of lessons to be learned.
- B. We can learn from other's successes. Hebrews 11-12.
 1. Hebrews 11 is often referred to as the Hall of Fame of Faith.

2. It gives us a list of people who trusted God and were rewarded for it. *Hebrews 11:6*. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
 3. We read of such people as:
 - a) Able.
 - b) Enoch.
 - c) Noah.
 - d) Abraham and Sarah.
 - e) Moses.
 - f) And many others.
 4. Then in chapter 12, we are told... *Hebrews 12:1-2*. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
 - a) That “great cloud of witnesses” is comprised of all of those who we discussed in the previous chapter.
 - b) Their faithfulness to God and God’s faithfulness in them ought to teach us to trust in God as well!
- C. We can learn from our own mistakes.
1. David’s example.
 - a) With Bathsheba.
 - (1) *2 Samuel 12:7*. Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man!...”
 - (2) *2 Samuel 12:13*. So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”
 - (3) It is important to note that, even though he undoubtedly would have had other opportunities, David never did something like this again.
 - b) With the movement of the ark.
 - (1) *2 Samuel 6:3*. So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.
 - (2) *2 Samuel 6:6-7*. And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. **7** Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God.
 - (3) David learned from his mistake. *1 Chronicles 15:11-15*. And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites: for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. **12** He said to them, “You are the heads of the fathers’ houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel to the place I have prepared for it. **13** For because you did not do it the first time, the Lord our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order.” **14** So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. **15** And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord.
 2. What about us?
 - a) Are we wise enough to learn from our past mistakes?
 - b) *Proverbs 26:11*. As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly.
 - c) We have a duty, an obligation, to learn from our past mistakes.
 - d) If we do not learn, we are doomed to repeat the mistakes again and again.
 - e) Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. - Einstein.
 - f) Learn from your mistake so that at least one good thing will come from it.
- D. We can learn from our own successes.
1. David’s example. *1 Samuel 17:34-37*. But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep his father’s sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, **35** I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by

its beard, and struck and killed it. **36** Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.” **37** Moreover David said, “The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you!”

- a) David knew that God had delivered him from the lion and bear in the past.
 - b) As a result, he knew that God would deliver him from Goliath.
 - c) It is important to note that David gave God the credit. He didn’t claim to have done these things by his own power or strength.
2. What about us?
- a) Do we remember all of the answered prayers?
 - b) Do we remember all of the times that God helped us get through a difficult patch?
 - c) Remembering those things ought to give us courage for the future.

II. ONCE WE HAVE LEARNED WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE PAST, WE MUST PRESS ON.

- A. Dwelling on past mistakes can be torture.
1. If ever anyone who had a past that they would like to forget, it had to be the apostle Paul.
 2. Yet, he said that he had to forget the past and press on. **Philippians 3:12-14**. 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. **13** 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, **14** I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
 3. There comes a time, when you just have to move on and press onward and upward.
 4. Even if our heart condemns us (we can’t forgive ourselves), God is greater than our heart. **1 John 3:20**. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.
- B. Dwelling on past successes has the potential to be equally dangerous.
1. Past successes will not get me to heaven.
 2. I have to stay faithful till death.
 3. **Ezekiel 18:24**. “But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.
 4. Even Paul pointed out that he had not yet attained to perfection. **Philippians 3:12**. 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.
 5. **1 Corinthians 10:12**. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

III. THERE IS ONE SENSE IN WHICH WE MUST NEVER LOOK BACK. LUKE 9:61-62. And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” **62** But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

- A. No one has ever **turned** back who hasn’t first **looked** back.
- B. We dare not look back on our previous lifestyle with longing.
1. **Proverbs 3:31**. Do not envy the oppressor, And choose none of his ways;
 2. **Proverbs 23:17**. Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day;
 3. **Proverbs 24:1**. Do not be envious of evil men, Nor desire to be with them;
 4. **Proverbs 24:19-20**. Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the wicked; **20** For there will be no prospect for the evil man; The lamp of the wicked will be put out.
- C. **Hebrews 6:4-6**. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, **5** and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **6** if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

- D. **2 Peter 2:20-21.** For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. **21** For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

CONCLUSION.

1. As Christians, we must learn from both our past mistakes and our past successes.
2. Once we learn what we can, we must move on...
 - a. And not continually beat ourselves up over our mistakes.
 - b. Ant not continually pat ourselves on our back for our successes.
3. We must never look back to that old life of sin with a desire to return.