

## Chapter 5

### Beginning the Next Chapter: Part I— Outlines and Outcomes

Paul, that first Christian missionary, states well how to make a new beginning in Philippians 3:13-15. “But one thing I do:

Forgetting

what is behind and straining toward that what is ahead, I press toward

the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.”

Of course, Paul did not literally forget all that was behind. We saw earlier that he remembered a long list of hardships that he had endured, often including exactly how many times each had occurred. What he meant was not that they were taken from his memory, but that he no longer held on to them so that they kept him from getting into the next chapter of his life. Paul could have played the “victim” and said “If only....” about many things. Consider the following.

- Blaming circumstances
  - If only I hadn’t been shipwrecked
  - If only I hadn’t been stoned
  - If only I hadn’t been in danger in the city
  - If only I hadn’t been in prison (read Philippians 1:12-19 on this one)
- Blaming others
  - If only John Mark had not abandoned me on my first term
  - If only Barnabas had not insisted on bringing his nephew on my second term

- If only others did not preach Christ out of:
  - Envy
  - Rivalry
  - Selfish ambition
  - Insincerity
  - Stirring up trouble
  - (Read Philippians 1:18 on this one)
- Blaming himself
  - If only I hadn’t misjudged John Mark (Acts 15:38)
  - If only I hadn’t been so stubborn about not bringing John Mark (Acts 15:39)
  - If only I hadn’t become so troubled that I turned and cast the spirit out (Acts 16:18)
  - If only I hadn’t suffered and been insulted in Philippi (1 Thessalonians 2:2)

Instead of blaming anyone or anything, instead of holding on to any difficult things in his past, he said, “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press toward the goal....” If you have not let go of difficult things in your past, you will probably have increased problems in straining toward the goal God has for you. Holding on to those things may keep you from making much progress toward that goal. This is the time to let go of those difficult things and become the “victor” rather than the “victim.” This may take time, a confidant, a box of tissue, prayer, an altar, and so forth. However, when you have done it, instead of looking to the past with “If only....,” you can begin looking to the future with “If I do this....”

As you have looked back over the last chapter of your life and hesitated in the transition time between chapters, you may have had some thoughts about the next chapter. It is about time to begin

outlining the next chapter in your life. Remember that an outline is only a guide, a rough plan for a first draft of the chapter. Sometimes as you begin writing that new chapter, you may realize that the outline has to be changed, perhaps very dramatically. This happened to Paul After settling a theological dispute that arose during their furlough, Paul and Barnabas begin to outline their second term. Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s go back to all the towns (including Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra) where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” Barnabas apparently agreed and added that he “wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them.” However, Paul did not think that was a good idea.

Look at Paul’s original chapter “outline” in Acts 15:36, quoted above.

- Where did he plan to go? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who did he plan to take with him? \_\_\_\_\_
- What did he plan to do? \_\_\_\_\_

Now look at the actual outcome.

- Where did Paul finally go? (Acts 16:10) \_\_\_\_\_
- Who went with him? (Acts 15:40) \_\_\_\_\_
- What did he do? (Acts 16:11-18:22) \_\_\_\_\_

At the end of his third term (Acts 20:16) Paul was in a hurry to get back to Jerusalem, so much of a hurry that he bypassed one of his favorite churches. However, even at that time as a seasoned missionary, he did not know what was in the future: “And now compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there...”(20:22-24 read the next few verses). What would he tell his supporters?

What will you tell yours?

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Briefly outline the next five years of your life, knowing that everything must be kept open to change.

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Most likely your outline contains some very wonderful scenarios. That is good for your expectations to major on the good. However, so that we will not be taken by surprise, Jesus told his disciples that some difficulties were likely to come into their lives as well. Although you do not have to put these in your outline, you need to be aware of these so that you do not feel like God has deserted you when they happen. Let us look at what Jesus had to say about the bad things that may happen to his workers.

Although it was not a cross-cultural assignment, Jesus orientation of his twelve disciples for their first assignment in Matthew 10 is illuminating.

- They were called (verse 1).
- They were given authority (verse 1).
- They were listed name by name (verses 2-4).
- They were given instructions:
  - Where to go (verses 5-6)
  - What to do (verses 7-8)
  - What to take (or not take) (verses 9-10)
  - How to start the work (verses 11-16)
  - What to expect (Verses 17-23)
    - Handed over to councils
    - Flogged
    - Taken before governors and kings

- Betrayed by brothers
- Hated by everyone
- Persecuted
- Forced to evacuate

When the disciples came to him later and asked about the end of time, he gave them an orientation to what his disciples would face in those last times in Matthew 24:4-14. These include the following:

- Deceptions
- Wars
- Rumors of wars
- Nation rising against nation
- Famines
- Earthquakes
- Persecution
- Death
- Hatred by all nations
- Deserters of the faith
- Betrayal by those in the faith
- Hatred by those in the faith
- False prophets
- Love of most will grow cold
- “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached to the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (verse 14).

How do these words of Jesus affect your tentative plans? What changes do they make in those plans?

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