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## **THE SURE WORD by Jonnie Hutchison**

### **PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote, "...but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). No one has the ability to actually travel back in time. We have our memories of the past, but we can do nothing to change what has already occurred in the past. But we can impact future events by the choices we make in the present. Paul was not looking to the past but to the present and the future. He was moving on in the present in order to reach his final goal of existing eternally with God in heaven.

Paul said that he was forgetting his past. In the past he had been a great persecutor of Christians. He had made his share of wrong choices in the past. But he also had made the right choice in accepting the Deity of Jesus Christ and obeying the gospel which changed the direction of both his present and his future (Acts 22:1-16) Paul contrasted his past life with his then present life when he wrote, "although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:13-15). Paul's example shows that regardless of one's past, one can make the right choice to serve the Lord, reaching in the present toward the "upward call" to obtain the "prize" of eternal life.

While Paul indicated that he was forgetting what was behind him, in his present life he was reaching forward to what lay before him. At that time in his life he was fighting the good fight of faith, faithfully running his Christian race and consistently keeping the faith. His prize would be the "crown of life" which the Lord would give him (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Because Paul made the choice to forget his past and to utilize his present to serve the Lord, he could look forward to a glorious future.

Though you cannot change the past, you can change what is happening now and what will happen in the future. Make the right choice. Turn from your sins in obedience to the gospel of Christ and, along with Paul, you can enjoy a glorious future in heaven.