

ENLIGHTENED BY THE PAST; ENCOURAGED ABOUT THE PRESENT, ECSTATIC REGARDING THE FUTURE

"The Past Is Behind, Learn From It. The Future Is Ahead, Prepare For It. The Present Is Here, Live It" - Thomas S. Monson

By Gerald Cumby



People who have changed the world did not necessarily have the same religious convictions as mine. However, when someone states a truth, we need to heed the truth and not dwell on the background of the person who states it. Different statesmen and religious leaders of our time have made great statements or quotes that have not only been relevant for the time, but absolutely necessary for our world to go forward. In some cases, God has used both Christians and non-Christians to reveal the truth to the past, present and future generations. Mr. Monson (quote above) gave a great truth. Therefore, I will go forward with this devotion to help those who are struggling with what is happening in this world of ours.

We can listen and reflect on our past struggles. We can meditate on the great successes of the past and use those successes to take us to the next station of our lives.

It is our duty as a follower of Christ to look for the good, the positive, and the joys of life in having to deal with the negative and destructive programs, projects, and platforms that will be thrust in front of us as we journey to our destination.

Recently, while getting out of our home and driving through the countryside during the COVID crisis (China Virus), we noticed that we were in a very low-income area with unkempt homes and yards. It is not my desire, nor intent, to see the poverty stricken areas and those who populate them while speculating on how those who dwell in these residences arrived to this state. I don't want to ever be the one who looks at himself in the mirror and think as the Pharisee thought of the publican (sinner) and prayed to God and stated, *"God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess, ..."* Luke 18:11b.

I certainly don't want to promote wealth over happiness in the Lord. I surely don't want to receive and not give in return. And, I passionately don't want to put prestige over humility at any time. I, along with Paul, state, *"Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin."* Romans 7:24-25.

We truly are all sinners saved by grace...if we have accepted Jesus, God's only Begotten Son, as our Savior.

The area Sherry and I were going through was filled with run-down residences, dilapidated mobile homes, and "lean-tos." All of the sudden we came upon a gated community (beautifully landscaped) with elegant homes and new and expensive vehicles entering through and leaving the community. There was a drastic change in environment, a dramatic contrast to the poverty area we had just gone through, and a breathtaking transformation from a fence of chicken-wire on one side and an ornamental designed fence within 5' of each other.

I could not help to think about the transformation of the sinner who has asked forgiveness of sin from the depths of his inner being and has been changed in the twinkling of an eye to a child of the King, a sinner who

has come home. The born-again experience is a transition from dark to light. Every one of the occupants in those poorly maintained homes are just as important to the Father God as the ones in the new homes. The difference is that they needed to know that there is a better way. They need to know that Jesus cares and you care...about their salvation.

As we look at the past, we can either stop to dwell there, or we can move on. The past might have been a great success for you. One thing about it; you can't live it again. It is gone...never to return as it was. We must go on and take the next step in our journey of life.

Yes, the past is one that we can learn and take note of as we move forward. There are many areas in our past we might want to forget...and maybe we should. But, whether we like it or not, the consequences of the choices we made in the past will not be removed without our dealing with them internally, as well as externally. We can learn from them and use those experiences to help stabilize the foundation we rely on for the present and future infrastructure in our lives.

The present is important in that it is what we are dealing with today and at the moment. All of us would agree that it would be difficult to be successful at anything if we did not have past experiences and training to help us make right choices today. The baby has to learn from infancy to adulthood as to how to deal with his/her needs, how to deal with dangerous areas of our lives, and how to deal with the people who hurt us or help us along the way. They, of course, are called "informative years." Information in; information out...we make the information useful to us, or we refuse to accept the information and rush into trouble...and not the "good trouble" that helps us make the right decisions in life.

I have always made it clear as to where I stand on present issues, whether religious or political...personal or community related. My stand has always been based on my moral values and what I understand the Scriptures to mean. However, since I am human, I can error in my decisions and choices as to how to handle the people and questionable things in life. In other words, I am certainly vulnerable when it comes to personally answering the questions other people have as they struggle through the cares of this world. They have experienced things I have not and I have experienced things they haven't. I do know, however, the answer to any question must be filtered through the Word of God. The fact is that God's Word is always true; however, it is the filtering system we work with that might cause us to error. Prayer and proper meditation

on God's Word are keys to making right choices in life. Without "God's filter genius" (the Holy Spirit), we are open to most any deceptive scam brought on by Satan.

Incidentally, we receive the Holy Spirit to help us with our decisions when we choose Jesus and repent of our sins. Making Jesus the focus of our lives gives us a helper (the Holy Spirit) in knowing what is right and what is wrong. He prods us on to know what is best for us as we go through life.

The future we don't know... unless it is recorded in God's Word. There is much prophecy in His Word and it is our duty to be an open vessel to prophetic understanding. We know who wins in the end. God lets us know that in His Word. How we handle persecution, lawlessness, and perversions that are constantly battling our wills is very important. Be strong, take courage, and live the life you know to be right because you know and understand the Scriptures.

Paul said it right when he told us what to dwell on to remain structured and at peace in our quest for the best in our lives.

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things." Philippians 4:8

To gain knowledge of what we have experienced in the past, to use the present to propel us to great expectations, and to yield to the ever present indwelling of the Holy Spirit to steer us to greatness in the future is what life is all about as we "stretch for the mark of the high-calling of God."

Let the Scriptures, God's word, speak to you as you present your life goals to the God who created you.

Isaiah 43:18 *"Do not call to mind the former things...or ponder things of the past."*

Philippians 3:13-14, *"Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the*

goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

2 Corinthians 5:17, "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

Ephesians 4:23-24, "Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy."

