
FROM THE MINISTRY OF



THRUthe**BIBLE**

Forget **ABOUT IT**

HOW TO PUT THE PAST BEHIND YOU

A photograph of a man in a light blue shirt carrying a young child on his shoulders. They are in a grassy field at sunset or sunrise. The child is holding a colorful kite with yellow, green, and red panels. The kite string has several bows. The man is holding the end of the string.

DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

FORGET ABOUT IT

HOW TO PUT THE PAST BEHIND YOU

The past is gone. You can't do anything about it. You can't change one event or one experience. But Paul the apostle said a Christian can do one helpful thing about the past. In fact, he made it very personal and said it's what he, himself, was doing:

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, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 3:13, 14

“This *one* thing I do.” A simple statement of the simple life. Most of us—even in Christian work—are busy with pots and pans. We try to bring so many things to a boil that we're not able to watch all of them. In our complex world, we need to simplify.

Say, like Paul, “This *one* thing I do.”

Call it the power of concentration, consolidation of purpose, or singleness of heart. Whatever you call it, we need it in our walk with God. In fact, this concept is all through the Bible.

What is this one thing we should do? I lift out one phrase from Philippians 3:13: “Forgetting those things which are behind.”

As we look back on our own lives, there are many things we are to forget. This is what Paul did with a great deal of his past.

But, first, there are certain things we are to remember.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

In Scripture, “remember” is usually associated with God, and “forget” is linked with man. God remembers better than we do. In Genesis, God remembered Noah (see Genesis 8:1). When God brought the children of Israel out of the land of bondage, He said, “Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt ...” (Exodus 13:3). They were to remember God’s deliverance and never forget it.

The problem is, we constantly forget. The psalmist sums it up with, “They forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt” (Psalm 106:21). How tragic. They forgot what God had done. Scripture is clear: To forget certain things is sin.

Like a bugle blast, the word “remember” goes all the way through the Word of God. “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth ...” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Even after we leave this life, we are still to remember. Abraham in sheol said to the rich man in torment, “Son, remember ...” (Luke 16:25). We’ll remember throughout the endless ages of eternity.

We're supposed to remember some things and forget other things. It was said of the villainous king, Richard III, "He forgot the things he should have remembered, and he remembered the things he should have forgotten." How true this is of us today. Many a man goes through life shackled and crippled because he will not forget the things he should forget.



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FORGET YOUR MISTAKES

First, forget your mistakes. We all blunder, don't we? Well, let's forget them. How many of us lose sleep over things we wish we hadn't said or done? My friend, correct what you've done and then forget it.

Talk about a blunderer—Simon Peter's list was long. Once in Caesarea Philippi when Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (see Matthew 16:15, 16).

What a glorious confession of faith! But not two minutes later, Peter turned right around and said something stupid. When our Lord forewarned the disciples He was going to Jerusalem to die, Peter rebuked Him, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" (Matthew 16:22). How did Jesus respond? "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:23). One moment Peter declared rightfully Jesus was the Son of God, and in the next moment he let Satan deceive him.

But let's not be too hard on Peter. He knew how to get up, dust himself off, forget those mistakes behind him, and press on to what was before him. This same man on the day of Pentecost, without mentioning his own mistakes and sin, stood up and said,

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

-Acts 2:36

He preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it brought conviction to those who listened, and thousands turned to Christ!

God uses blunderers. I'm sure glad.

FORGET YOUR SENSITIVITIES

We live in an age when transportation, communication, exploding populations, and urban life bring us all together. We are closer to one another than we have ever been. When you get people close together, they rub against each other. Contemporary society is a hotbed of rivalries, alienations, and personality conflicts.

My friend, you are going to get hurt in life's struggle. Somebody is going to offend you. How many people nurse grudges and hurts? You may even be carrying ill feelings and spreading disruption and disturbance among God's people.

There's a plant known as the "sensitive plant," because the minute it's touched by human hands, the stalk withers and the leaves curl up. A lot of human beings are *sensitive plants* today.

The book of Esther tells about a man named Haman who was like that. The king of Persia elevated Haman to the highest position in the kingdom. Word was sent around to all the politicians that they were to bow before him. They all bowed, except for one: A judge named Mordecai.

Mordecai was little in stature, but he had great moral courage. He was a Jew who had been taught from the Old Testament that he was to worship no one except the Lord his God. So he refused to bow to Haman.

You would think Haman—being favored by the king and exalted to the position of prime minister—would be big enough to overlook it. But instead Haman started a wave of anti-Semitism.

My friend, don't let your life be ruined by wounds and hurts. As you look back into your past and remember personal injuries, forget them.

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FORGET YOUR SUCCESSES

Today we measure people by the dollar sign. How much money have you made? Are you a success in business? What school did you graduate from, what title do you have at work, how much influence do you have? My beloved, these values are wrong. Many a man is called a success who is a sorry failure at home.

Samuel, one of God's men, was a failure in his own home. His life sounds like a success story until you read of his failure:

Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

-1 Samuel 8:1-3

He made his own sons judges to succeed him, but they were dishonest, unworthy, and incompetent. Samuel was a judge, a wonderful prophet, and a great man of God—but he was a failure as a father.

My friend, if you have made a lot of money, if you have attained the position you were after, you would do well to forget it.

FORGET YOUR SORROWS

If sorrow has not yet come to you, it will. The death angel is no respecter of persons; he knocks at all doors, and he will knock at yours. If tragedy has come your way and sorrow fills your heart, I say to you kindly, forget it. I'm not asking you to forget your loved one, but forget your sorrow.

One of the most common questions asked of a pastor is, "Why did God let this happen to me?" God has a definite reason:

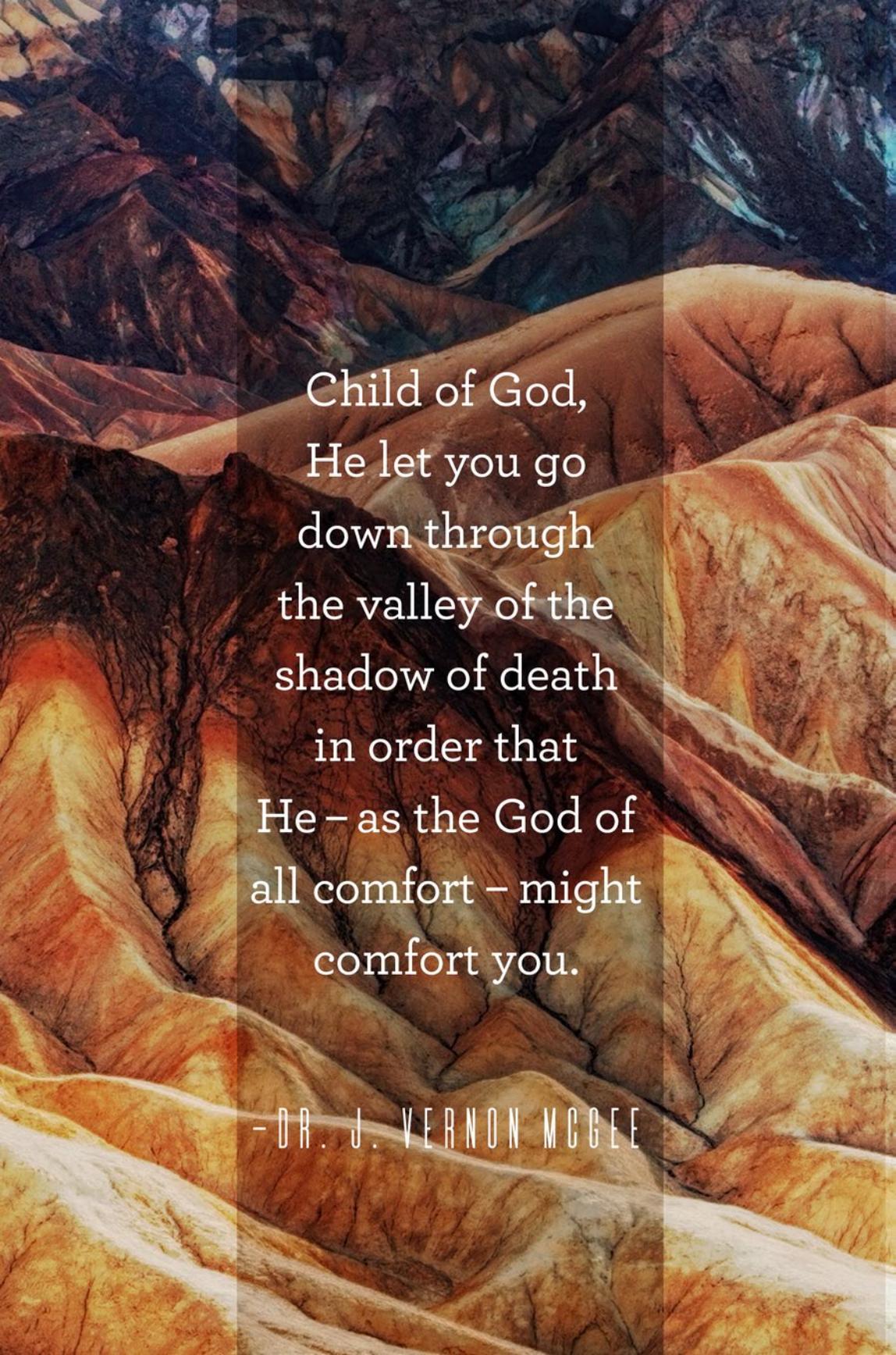
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. –2 Corinthians 1:3, 4

Child of God, He let you go down through the valley of the shadow of death in order that He—as the God of all comfort—might comfort you. And He does it so, through you, His Word can bring comfort to others.

King David had a little baby son who hung in the balance between life and death. David went down on his face before God, fasting and weeping. After a week the little one died. The servants were afraid to tell David, thinking he might be overcome by sorrow and harm himself. David heard them whispering and asked, "Is the child dead?" When they told him yes, David arose and washed his face, changed his clothes, and went to the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went home and had a good dinner.

Then his servants said to him, "What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food." And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." –2 Samuel 12:21-23

In other words, "I'll forget the things that are behind and move toward what is ahead." My friend, learn from David and forget your sorrows.



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FORGET YOUR SINS

God's Word makes it clear what we are to do with our sins: Confess them promptly to God, and then forget them.

I think God gets tired of us reminding Him of our past sins. After we have dealt with the sin and confessed it privately to God, He says it's forgotten—"forget those things which are behind."

David spoke of a unique place:

Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? –Psalm 88:12

I don't know the actual location of the "land of forgetfulness," but wherever it is, it's the proper place for the forgiven failures of your past.

But maybe your sins aren't forgiven, or you are not *sure* they are forgiven. If that's your situation, I ask you: Would you like to wipe out the sins and stains of your past? Would you like confidence they are forgiven? God will not only forgive your sins, He will do something else: He will *forget* them. His Word says it over and over:

... For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. –Jeremiah 31:34

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. –Psalm 103:12

God has put our sins behind His back, and He won't turn around. When we come to the living God and repent, He forgives and forgets. He says, "I see you in Christ, and I accept you in the Beloved. My child, you are lovely to Me, and you can call Me Father. Someday you will stand before My throne without spot or blemish."

WHAT COMES NEXT?

So, the foibles, hurts, successes, sorrows, and sins of the past are forgotten. What next? God's Word has an answer for that, too: Look to Jesus.

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.

—Hebrews 12:2

Just as it's true the past cannot be changed, likewise Scripture makes it clear no one can know the future: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).

But the future is not totally unknown. Someone is at the controls, keeping a mighty hand on the steering wheel of time. God alone knows the end from the beginning.

The writer of the Psalms expresses it beautifully: "...From everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalm 90:2). In the Hebrew language it is even more picturesque than that—literally, it is "from the vanishing point of eternity past to the vanishing

point of eternity future, You are God.” It may be nothing but turmoil and chaos down here, but calm is about God’s throne, because He knows everything to come.

Even so, some still plunge defiantly into the future on their own. Scripture hits it on the nose:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. –Isaiah 53:6

The fundamental trouble with all of us today are those three little words: “his own way.” We don’t want to go God’s way; we want to go our way. Does that describe you?

The Lord Jesus said,

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. –John 14:6

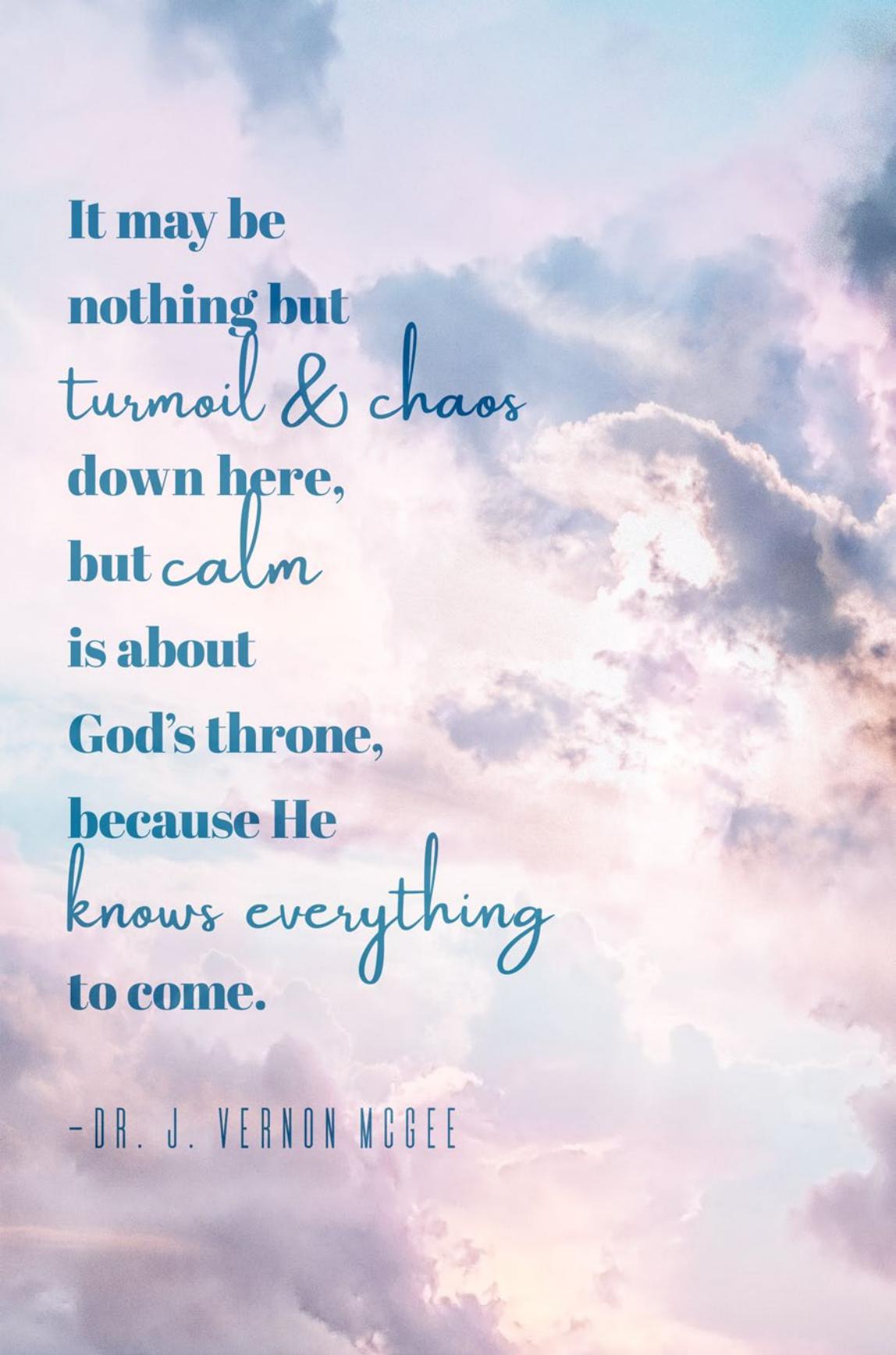
Only one way leads to God—*His* way. Friend, have you come this way?

We may stand on the threshold of the unknown future, but Paul stands with us, saying,

... 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

After you have done the hard work of forgetting what is behind, look to Jesus Christ, “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). Come to Him, the One who is the way, the truth, and the life—the One who can bring you into contact with the Father.

None of us know what tomorrow will bring. But God does. Why not put Him at the controls of your life?



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A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and greenery.

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets with titles and descriptions, and a 'Download' button for each. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden bench.

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