

Accidental Pharisees – Graduation Day

It's Graduation Sunday - A time of transition for our seniors... high school... college... & for 2 of our senior saints, a transition from this life to the next!

Graduation day is always bittersweet... glad that it's done, but sad that it's over... closing one chapter of life, but opening a new one... saying goodbye, but also saying hello... leaving what is known/familiar & entering the unknown!

On graduation day, should we be looking back or setting our eyes on what is ahead? Should the focus be on the ending or on the new beginning? Or both?

My wife & I have spent a lot of time this past week looking at old pictures & reminiscing about what many call "the good old days!" Many of us wish we could turn back the clock & relive those days, especially at times like this!

The past always looks great in pictures & in our fond memories... but let's not forget the things that time & our selective memory has forgotten!

The pictures we take, & post, are the highlights of those seasons of life... No one takes pictures of the negative memories that we all would like to forget!

We can remember & celebrate the past, & the good things in it... but we should be cautious not to idolize it. For it can rob us of the present & our future.

This is true for our graduates & their families... This is true for the loved ones of those who have graduated from this life to the next... This is true for all of us!

3 Biblical examples of idolizing the past, rather than living in God's present:

- The Israelites in the wilderness during the time of the exodus...
- The Jewish Christians in the 1st century after the time of Jesus...
- The Pharisees witnessing the life & teachings of Jesus, but rejecting Him...

1) The Israelites in the wilderness – They graduated from Slavery University in Egypt, but they longed to go back there after graduation! Why?

What were their fond memories? **Numbers 11:5, Exodus 16:3**
But what had they forgotten? They were slaves in Egypt... Their purpose was only to bring glory to Egypt... Their life/death meant nothing...

So why did they have such rose-colored glasses about their time in Egypt? Because Egypt was predictable... consistent... it had shaped their worldview... it required no trust in God for their present, or their future!

Lesson for today – Don't miss what God has in store for you today, & for your future, because you are too stuck on what's in the past!

2) The Jewish Christians of the 1st century – They graduated from "Old Covenant University" but they too wanted to return after graduation!

What were their fond memories? **Genesis 17:10-11** (circumcision) & **Acts 15:1, 5** (following Moses). But what had they forgotten? The old covenant was never intended to be an end in itself – it was always for the purpose of pointing to Christ. **Romans 10:4, Galatians 5:6**

So why did they have such rose-colored glasses about the old covenant? Because it was familiar... it didn't require change... it was distinguishing...

Lesson for today – Don't forget God's redemptive purpose... It's for you & for others... Don't be so focused on what you know & miss what God's doing

3) The Pharisees of Jesus' day – They graduated from "law" school, and yet they rejected the very fulfillment of all the laws they knew so well!

What were their fond memories? Being in the places of honor/prestige! But what had they forgotten? That honor in God's Kingdom comes from being a blessing/a servant... that the first will be last, and the last first!

Why did they have such rose-colored glasses when it came to the law? Because fulfillment of it set them apart... & gave assurance (though false).

Lesson for today – Your own accomplishments will not set you apart in God's eyes... only faith in His Son will do that! Christ's accomplishments matter more than yours/ours... and they last for eternity!

Both Rose Murray & Bob Besida, on their final graduation day wanted nothing more than to be with Jesus! It was granted, and it made for one heck of a grad party in heaven... and it ensured their eternal future as well!

The message to our graduates, & to all of us, is simple

- Don't live the rest of your life looking in the rearview mirror...
- Today, is tomorrow's "Good old days" so make the most of it...
- Take off the rose-colored glasses of the past & focus your gaze on Christ, for He is the One who gives our lives true & lasting significance!

What are we graduating to? Now that's a good question worth answering!
What place does Jesus have in your answer?

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