

Your Past is Past: Time to Move On Romans 16:14-15

In these two verses Paul greets eleven specific individuals (ten by name), and two additional groups of believers who were associated with the eleven. These people could be called “The Spirit’s Eleven” because of the difficulty they faced in their lives in Rome.

- (1). Most had their rights taken away . . .** The Greek scholar William Cranfield points out that the majority of these names are common slave names. As a slave in Rome you would live right in the middle of classical civilization, but not be able to grasp it yourself.
- (2). Some faced rejection by family members . . .** At least two of the names, Hermes and Olympas, seem to indicate privilege. These men were born in homes of privilege and dedicated to the gods, taking them as a namesake. Conversion meant rejection by family.
- (3). One even had to live in the midst of ridicule . . .** One of the slaves had the name *Phlegon* (v.14), which was a common name for dogs, but not people. It is obvious that this person had to live every day of his life facing ridicule for something he was, or did.

Yet all eleven seemed to have adjusted well and become leaders of others... How? The world would have you go back and rehash your past, or cause you to believe that any problems you now face are the faults of others, but God would have us see it differently.

(Read Philippians 4:4-9 NIV)

I. Your difficult past should not define your personality . . .

“Rejoice in the Lord always . . . let your gentleness be evident to all” (Phil. 4:4-5).

(A). God appoints (ordains) all events of your life . . .

“No one should be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that you were destined for them” (I Thess. 3:3). There can be no argument with Providence.

(B). God arranges all events of your life for good . . .

The good is long term (eternal) and transcendent (above your comprehension). God told Hezekiah that Israel would be ravaged by the Babylonians, all stored goods would be carried away, and the children would be made palace eunuchs. All this would happen after Hezekiah died. He responded by saying, *“Good is the word of the Lord . . . for there shall be peace in my days”* (Isaiah 39:8).

II. Your difficult past cannot destroy your potential.

“Do not be anxious about anything . . . but present your requests to God” (Phil. 4:6).

There is a promise God makes when you bring to him your concerns and cares.

“The peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your heart” (v.7).

I’m all right. I’ve talked to God about it. I’m all right. It’s in the hands of my God!

III. Your difficult past must not determine your purpose.

The world’s message is to get even. God tells you to move on with your life.

That which is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy; do those things. When you put your focus on Christ and His mercies which are new every day, you will be able to put your past in the past and move on with your life.