

Keeping Ourselves Unspotted from the World
(Lesson 20)

Introduction:

1. According to James 1:27, "keeping ourselves unspotted from the world" is an important part of "pure and undefiled religion before God."
2. Many specific issues that relate to keeping ourselves unspotted from the world are addressed in the Scriptures.
3. In this lesson we are concentrating on a subject that the apostle Paul discussed in Philippians 3:8-17 -- "maintaining our focus."
 - a. In these verses Paul revealed some principles that helped him to stay focused.
 - b. He also stated that we are to imitate his example.
4. The first principle we are observing is that . . .

Discussion:

- I. PAUL WAS NOT SATISFIED WITH HIS PRESENT SPIRITUAL CONDITION (vs.12)
 - A. Paul had a goal that he was striving to achieve.
 1. (vs.11) His goal was to "attain unto the resurrection of the dead."
 2. He realized that he had not reached that goal and that he was not perfect.
 3. His goal motivated him to make improvements in his life so he might achieve it.
 - B. There is a sense in which Paul had learned contentment [with his physical condition -- 4:11].
 - C. Paul had his priorities in the right order.
 1. He had learned to be content with his physical condition.
 2. However, he was not satisfied with his spiritual condition.
 - D. The opposite approach must be avoided.
 1. It is possible for us to become satisfied with our spiritual conditions.
 2. If this occurs we will have no desire to make improvements in our lives.
 - E. Because Paul was not satisfied with his present spiritual condition, he did one thing (vs.13) that actually consisted of 2 activities.
- II. THE FIRST ACTIVITY WAS FORGETTING THOSE THINGS THAT WERE BEHIND
 - A. In vs.4-6, Paul listed his accomplishments as a Jew, and according to vs.7, these are the things he forgot -- he counted them "loss for Christ."
 - B. In forgetting these things, Paul neglected them [he no longer cared for them, and they were no longer important to him].
 - C. Perhaps the most difficult thing for Paul to forget was his persecution of the church.
 1. (vs.6a) He had been zealous in persecuting Christians.
 2. After he became a Christian his past haunted him for a time.
 3. He was not able to completely remove what he had done from his memory [he said he had been "a blasphemer," "a persecutor," and "injurious" – I Timothy 1:13].
 4. Paul remembered what he had done, but he did not allow it to control him.
 5. He had been forgiven when he obeyed the Gospel, and he knew that God had taken away his sin (Acts 22:16; Psalm 103:12).
 - D. After forgetting those things that were behind, . . .
- III. PAUL'S SECOND ACTIVITY WAS REACHING FORTH UNTO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEFORE
 - A. (vs.11) Paul's goal was to attain unto the resurrection.
 - B. Paul was diligent in achieving this goal (vs.13b, 14).
 - C. It is important that we have a clear understanding of these guidelines because . . .
- IV. WE ARE TO IMITATE PAUL'S EXAMPLE
 - A. (vs.15) We are to be "thus minded."
 - B. (vs.16) We are to "walk by the same rule," and we are to "mind the same thing."
 - C. Let us not be satisfied with our present spiritual conditions, let us forget those things which are behind, and let us reach forth unto those things which are before.
 - D. Maintaining our focus, as Paul did, will help us in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.