

That Bucket of Milk Has Already Been Spilt

May 1, 2005

Philip. 3:7-14 (NKJV)

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. [8] Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ [9] and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; [10] that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, [11] if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

[12] Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. [13] 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, [14] I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

It has been almost twenty years ago now, but I still remember the morning that Janet and I were at St. Luke's Hospital following a nurse who was pushing her daddy down the hall on a gurney heading for the operating room.

We stopped at the elevator door, and while we waited for an elevator to come, somehow our conversation got on the subject of how so many people allow things that have happened to them somewhere in their past to ruin the present and the future.

I think it started when my wife's sister said something about how people let their yesterdays ruin their today.

The nurse, whose name was Joyce, said, "What I always say is, "When that bucket of milk has been spilt, forget about it, you're not going to get that milk back in the bucket again. Get another bucket and start over. Honey, that bucket of milk has already been spilt."

When we got to the operating room, Joyce went one way and we headed for the waiting room.

The next day, Janet went back to the hospital to visit her father and I happened to run into Joyce there in the hallway again. I told her that I was a pastor and that I was going to use what she had said to me the day before in a sermon. When I said that, Joyce started talking about it again, but this time she had time to finish the story and I discovered why this truth meant so much to her.

She told me the story of how about eight months earlier her twelve year old daughter had gotten sick. She said it wasn't anything very serious, just some sort of a rash on her skin.

But for some unexplained reason, the skin condition got infected and the doctor said her daughter would have to have an operation. It was not supposed to be all that serious an operation, but for some inexplicable reason, Joyce's daughter died on the operating table.

Think about it. This lady, whose profession was helping others recover from their sicknesses, lost the apple of her eye. Her beautiful twelve year old daughter.

She told me that she was devastated. She got angry with God. Bitterness filled her heart. The tragic death of her twelve year old daughter was causing another tragedy. It was causing her to become a bitter, angry, unproductive person.

But then, she said, that a minister visited her and helped her to realize that all the bitterness and anger in the world would not bring her daughter back.

She realized, "That bucket of milk was already spilt".

And she made a decision to leave all the unanswerable questions to God.

Joyce decided that she would not let the tragic death of her twelve year old daughter also destroy her. As a result of that decision, Joyce became a stronger, more productive, more loving person. She lived her life there at St. Luke's Hospital helping others who were suffering from some tragedy in their lives.

In the twelfth chapter of Second Samuel we read an interesting story in the life of King David. His baby was dreadfully sick. David was extremely distraught; he prayed night and day believing that God could heal his child. He wouldn't eat or drink; he didn't shave or shower. He didn't attend to any business. He wouldn't do anything but pray and cry out to God.

But despite all that David did, on the seventh day the child died. David's servants didn't know what to do. They didn't know how they could tell David that the child was dead. They thought he would be so devastated that he wouldn't be able to handle it.

But when David figured out what had happened , he surprised them all. He got up. He washed his face and put on some clean clothes. Then he asked his servants to bring him some food, and he sat down and ate a meal.

His servants couldn't understand it. They said, "David, when your child was alive, you fasted and prayed. But now that he's gone, you act as if nothing's wrong."

David said, "That's right. I fasted and prayed when my son was sick. I thought God might heal him. But now that he's gone, I cannot bring him back. He will not return to me, but I will go to be with him."

David didn't get bitter. He didn't question God. He didn't say, "God, I thought You loved me, why didn't You answer my prayer?"

David didn't do that! He trusted God in the midst of his disappointment. He let it in the hands of the all wise and all loving God and he went forward with his life.

When Abraham was trying to bargain with God over the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he made this statement.....

Genesis 18:25 (NKJV)

.....Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

When you and I don't understand why something has happened in our lives, we need to leave it in the hands of our all-knowing and all-loving God knowing that He will always do what is right whether we understand it or not.

Everybody goes through some bad experiences. Life isn't fair! You may have had more than your share of trouble. But you must not allow your past to determine your future. You can't do anything about what has happened to you, but you can choose how you will respond to it.

If you choose to hold on to the hurts and feelings of bitterness and resentment it will poison your future. Let go of those hurts and pains. Forgive those who did you wrong. Forgive yourself. Forgive God!

If you have been blaming God for what is wrong in your life, the first thing you need to do is forgive Him.

There are some people who must enjoy feeling terrible. They thrive on self-pity. They love the attention they get when they recite all the bad things that have happened to them.

In his book, Joel Osteen tells about a couple whose son was killed in a freak accident at work. It was one of those senseless, unexplainable accidents for which there are no words of comfort. He said, "Family and friends hovered over the couple for several months, empathizing with them in their grief and attempting to nurture them back to a degree of normalcy.

But regardless of their comforters' sensitive efforts, Phil; and Judy refused to let go of their grief. Whenever their son's name was mentioned, their eyes welled up with tears and their woeful mourning began all over again. Slowly but surely the comforters quit coming. People stopped calling. Family members stopped visiting.

Any time someone tried to lift the couple's spirits their efforts were met with words like, "You just don't know what it is like to lose your only son."

They remained untouched. In their minds, nobody had ever felt pain the way they had. They were forever known as the couple who tragically lost their son. Consequently, fifteen years after the fact, they continue to languish in self-pity and self-induced isolation. Why? Because they don't want to get well.

In the Bible there is the story about a man in Jerusalem who had been crippled for thirty-eight years. He spend everyday of his life lying on a mat by the Pool of Bethesda, hoping for a miracle. I think we would all agree that this man had a problem. It was a deep-seated, lingering disorder.

Many people today have lingering disorders. They may not be physical; they may be emotional, but they are deep-seated, lingering disorders just the same. They could be from an unwillingness to forgive or from holding on to past resentments or from refusing to let go of something that happened in the past.

Whatever it is, these lingering disorders affect their personalities, their relationships, and their self-images. They sit back year after year, waiting for a miracle to happen, waiting for some big event to come along to make everything better.

One day Jesus saw the man lying there in need. It was obvious that he was crippled, but Jesus asked the man what seemed to be a strange question. He said, "Do you want to be made well?"

Jesus is asking the same question today: "Do you want to be well or do you want to continue lying around feeling sorry for yourself?"

The question that Jesus asked was simple and required only a "yes" or "no" answer, but the man began listing all kinds of excuses, "I'm all alone. I don't have anyone to help me. Other people have let me down. Other people always seem to get ahead of me. I don't have a chance."

No wonder he had remained there all those years.

Jesus didn't stand there and listen to the man's excuses. He didn't commiserate with him. He said, in effect, "If you are serious about getting well, if you are serious about getting your life in order, if you really want to get out of this mess, here's what you are going to have to do. Get up off the ground, take up your bed, and be on your way."

When the man did what Jesus told him to do, he was miraculously healed.

That is the message for you today. If you are serious about being well, if you really want to be made physically and emotionally whole, you must get up and get moving with your life.

Stop lying around feeling sorry for yourself. Stop making excuses. Stop blaming other people or circumstances. Refuse to live with a victim mentality any longer.

You might be saying, "I just don't understand why this happened to me. I don't understand why I got sick. Why did my loved one die? Why did my marriage break up? Why was I raised in such an abusive environment?"

You may never know the answer to those questions. But don't use that as an excuse to wallow in self-pity. Leave it alone, get up, and move on with your life.

That bucket of milk has already been spilt. Forget it and move on with your life.

If this message is hitting home tonight, God is telling you to, "Forget those things that are behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead."

I used to sing a song. It wasn't a religious song, but it did give some good advice. It said.....

That's life, that's what people say.

You ride high in April you get shot down in May.

But I know I'm gonna change that tune when I'm back on top in June.

That's life. Funny as it seems.

Some people get their kicks out of steppin' on dreams.

But I don't let it get me down.

Cause this ol' world just keeps spinnin' around.

I've been a puppet a pauper, a pirate, a poet, a pawn and a king.
I've been up and down and over and out and I know one thing.
Every time I find myself flat on my face.
I pick myself up and get back in the race.
That's life. I can't deny it.
I've thought of quittin' but my heart just won't buy it.
If I didn't think it was worth a try.
I'd roll myself up in a big ball and die."

Every time you find yourself flat on your face you need to pick yourself up and get back in the race.

the Devil is doing everything he can to destroy you. And if he can get you to dwell on that bucket of milk that has been spilt, he has devoured you just as effectively as if he had caused you to commit a terrible sin.

Let me tell you one more story. It's about a lady who lived in Lexington, Virginia just after the Civil War.

She was filled with bitterness, hatred and resentment because of what was done by the Union Army. One day, General Robert E. Lee happened to be in Lexington and met this lady who was so filled with hatred and bitterness.

General Lee was not at all like this lady. To the day of his death, he was never heard to speak an unkind word about those who had formally been his enemies.

The lady showed General Lee the scarred remains of a tree in her yard. All the limbs had been shot off by the Federal Artillery.

She just knew the general would share her sense of outrage. So she waited expectantly for him to comment.

Finally, the general spoke. And these were his words, "Cut it down, my dear madam, and forget it."

That was good advice.

If there is something that has been eating at you, it's time for you to deal with it. Cut it down and forget it. Plant another tree. Get another bucket of milk. Pick yourself up and get back in the race.

Give invitation!