

One Small Step Part 2

Get Past The Past

Lamentations 3:19-23

Memory Verses: Lamentations 3:22-23

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle) One small step can seem like a waste of time. Hundreds of small steps can seem exhausting. But a thousands small steps can lead to giant leaps of victory. This is what Neil Armstrong meant when he stepped onto the surface of the moon and said his famous words, "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." As we saw last week... it took a million small steps from Wilbur and Orville Wright flying kites in 1896 to Neil stepping on the Lunar surface on July 21st 1969.

Great things all start with one small step, with one small decision. It's the same with your life. Your destiny is determined by day to day decisions. Everyday we must determine to make small steps, small decisions, that eventually will lead us to the destiny that God has given to us. Everyday we must determine to take the small steps of listening to God's still small voice. Everyday we must determine to take the small steps of growing in the wisdom and knowledge of God.

These are small steps, but they are necessary steps. We make those small steps, those small decisions daily by depending on God to help us... to give us the strength to persevere... every single day. We can't walk without Jesus who gives us strength. So, yes... your destiny is determined by day to day decisions... but also... your destiny is determined by day to day dependency on Jesus. He is our source of strength to take every single step... every single day. Look again at our passage from last week, **Psalm 37:23-24**. God celebrates the small steps. God loves it when we depend on him and take that next small step.

But our struggle isn't simply that we get bored or frustrated with small steps. Yes, we don't like small steps. We like to dream big dreams but we don't like to take small steps. But, it's not just because we are overwhelmed by the journey. There's something else that is keeping us from taking those steps. There's something holding us back isn't there? And you know what it is right? Say it with me, "My... Past."

It's our past. It's the reason why we don't like to make resolutions, it's the reason we struggle with commitments, it's the reason why we often stay in places that God has not called us to stay. We don't progress because, "I've tried it before and I got hurt, or I failed, or it didn't work." God, I can't take that next step, because last time I took that step I fell and it hurt and I'm not sure I can get past it now. And here's something

you need to understand. God gets it. God knows that our pasts are huge obstacles to moving forward. Look with me if you would at a passage I came across in the book of Lamentations. If you are looking for encouragement... I would encourage you not to read the book of lamentations. But there is one passage that is really good... the whole point of the book hinges on this passage right here. It says in **Lamentations 3:19-23** that we will struggle with our past but the love of God and his mercies are new every morning. How do we move past our past? How do we take the small step past our past everyday? By recognizing that God is good and his mercy is new every morning.

Today I want us to see that we can leave our past in the past. We can get past our past and start moving forward. Today I want you to know that... **Your Past Can Only Hold You Back As Long As You Choose To Trust In It More Than The Mercy And Love Of Christ .**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing I want you to realize is... **The Pain of Your Past Can Paralyze You Or Propel You**. We will see how to get past our past in a bit but first we need to see how our past pain keeps us from moving forward. Look with me at **Genesis 11:27-28, 31-32**. Look with me at the genealogy of Noah after the tower of Babel... we go through all of these names that we aren't that familiar with and we read Terah fathered Abram and we stop because we know Abram who became Abraham who became the father of our faith. Abraham is a big deal and so we should probably stop skimming over these names and stop here and see if there is something to learn. In **vs27** Abraham's family here consists of his father Terah, his brothers Nahor and Haran, and his nephew Lot. And note this real quick... in **vs28** Haran dies right in front of Terah while the family lived in a place called Ur. Skip down to **vs31** where Terah leads his family to leave Ur and go to Canaan (the land of promise). The father of Abraham, has a plan to leave the place where Haran died and go to a new land called Canaan, but then when they come to a place called Haran, they settle there. Now the kicker... **vs32** Terah died in Haran.

So get this....Terah obviously had a calling on his life to go to the land of promise. Before God called Abraham to go to a land that He would show him, God had planted this idea in the mind of Terah his father. Some theologians believe that Terah might have been the Father of the faith instead of Abraham if he'd made it to the promised land. So, what stopped him? Why couldn't he make that final step to Canaan? He came to Haran... a town named with the same name as his son who died right in front of him and he stalled out. Some theologians believe the pain of losing his son became too much to bear, and when he came to the town of the same name as his son he couldn't leave. He wouldn't lose his son again. Perhaps he

wanted to die in the town named after his son who died. This place connected him to the pain of his past and paralyzed him.

Listen... **We will never find the place of health until we move past the place of hurt.** His past pain would not let him move forward. Terah couldn't get past his past. Terah could have possibly been the father of our faith but because he couldn't make that small step past Haran to Canaan Abraham became the father of the faith.

So what past pain is paralyzing you? What step are you stopping on? **There will always be a Haran before you get to a Canaan...** but we can't stop there. There will always be a memory of a past mistake, or failure, or tragedy. Satan will constantly remind you of your past failures or past pains to keep you from taking the next step.

Let me ask you a question. Is this a step? (When I take a full half step forward on the **step ladder**) It's not a full step if I still have one foot in the past and another foot forward. You aren't moving forward if you are straddling brokenness and blessing. You have to take the full step forward moving beyond your past pain to see the blessing that God has for you. If you keep walking forward all your past pains will pay off... but you have to keep taking those small steps forward. Please get this... **If you recognize that your past pain leads to future blessings then you will allow your pain to propel you instead of paralyze you.** You can either toy with taking a step or you can take a step. You can get paralyzed thinking about taking a step or you can finally use the momentum of you pain to propel you forward and take the step. But, don't get stuck in the middle. Once you take one step forward it becomes easier to take the next step.

I know what you are thinking.... "I've been hurt in churches before – do I give it another shot?" "I've been deeply involved in church before but it didn't work out – should I get in a small group or join a team?" "I've been burned in relationships before – should I trust these people?" Listen, God isn't saying you need to jump to the top right now... all he is saying is take one small step and see where it leads. Get one victory and let it lead to another victory.

Let me enlighten you okay. I watched a clip of this guy talking about Mt. Everest. Did you know if I just dropped you on top of Mt. Everest from a helicopter you would die. Your lungs would collapse. Why? Cause you didn't take the steps it took to get there from the bottom. Your lungs didn't acclimate to the altitude. The only way to get to the top is to take the small steps to the top which help your lungs acclimate to the altitude little by little. And that's how moving beyond your past works. God doesn't just take you to the top and drop you off... you wouldn't be able to take that. Instead he lets you take small steps away from your past that help you acclimate to the destination that he has propelled you to.

And here's another interesting tid-bit about Everest. You can't climb Everest by yourself. You have to go in a team. Even if you are a climbing veteran you need someone who has taken the trip before to show you the steps to take that will get you to the top or you won't make it. Do you see where I'm going? This is why every believer needs a small group and a group and a peer mentor relationship. Every Christian needs someone to follow in their steps as they follow in Jesus steps. Look at **1 Cor 11:1** where Paul says imitate me as I imitate Christ. This is big. You need to... **find someone who has found a way past their past to help you find a way past your past.** If you try to step past the pain and failures by yourself it will be difficult, but if you have someone showing you how they did it, encouraging you to keep moving forward, praying for you every step of the way... you have a really good shot of getting past it and going to the top of the mountain. The main point is simple... **Your Past Can Only Hold You Back As Long As You Choose To Trust In It More Than The Mercy And Love Of Christ.**

So let's explore that more. The next thing I want you to see this morning is this... **You Can Remember Your Pain Or You Can Rest In Christ's Promises.** Turn back to that passage we started with in **Lamentations 3:19-20**. We see three things that Jeremiah was looking at in his past. First, his afflictions. Listen, we can't forget our past afflictions. We can't forget the things that happened to us that we couldn't control. We can't forget our friend or family member who passed away tragically. We can't forget being betrayed by our friends. We can't forget being fired unjustly from our job. We can't forget the divorce or the abuse. Right?

Another thing that Jeremiah can't look past is his past wanderings. We can't forget the bad choices we made, our sins that really derailed us. We can't forget what we said in our anger. We can't forget the lies we told. We can't forget the adultery we committed, the lustful show we watched, the numbers we fudged, or the gossip we started. These are the things that Satan always reminds us of and says you can't take that next step because you are a fraud. No one will believe you are changed because you did that. Don't listen to that junk. Throughout the history of the Bible... since the dawn of time... **God uses broken people to build his kingdom...** and he can still use you! I may be broken but I'm not finished, I may be down but I'm not out.

The last thing that Jeremiah couldn't look past was his bitterness. We can't forget the way it made us feel can we? It's true... there's a lot of people will forget about you, but people will never forget the way you made them feel. Broken relationships leave bitterness.

And Jeremiah looks at all this past junk and his soul is cast downward. We can allow this pain to stall us out. We can get downcast and devastated by constantly dwelling on the past. We can allow all of this pain

to keep us from making a step forward. We want to go forward but we can't stop looking at the pain. But, you know that if you don't step up you'll stall out.

So how are we going to overcome all of this past pain? We must step forward to the next verse. Look at **Lamentations 3:21-23**. We call to mind, we think beyond our past to something else. In **vs21** We find something else that is more important to dwell on than our past. This other thing that we dwell on (the Lord) gives us a greater hope than the pain our past gives us that brings us down. Why does the Lord give us hope? Because in **vs22** Jesus meets my afflictions with love. The world beat you down, the tragedies of this life took your hope... but Jesus says, "I beat all of that when I died on the cross for you," "the world did this but, because I love you... I did this and my love is so much greater than your pain." Because in **vs22** Jesus meets my wanderings with mercy. Your sins condemn you and shame you and leave you broken, but Jesus says, "I don't condemn you... go and sin no more, you're forgiven." Because in **vs23** Jesus meets my bitterness with faithfulness. Your bitterness says they've done me wrong, but Jesus says "father please forgive them for they don't know what they do." You can't move forward when you keep looking back at your past.... so Jesus gives you something to bring your attention to the front... himself!

You won't want to look backward when you are constantly focused on the love, hope, mercy and faithfulness of Jesus. **When we focus on the promises of God we step up... when we focus on the past we stall out**- Great is his faithfulness. He's never forsaken you, He's never not walked with you through your pain, He's never forgotten you, He's never given up on you. **Your Past Can Only Hold You Back As Long As You Choose To Trust In It More Than The Mercy And Love Of Christ.**

Application

So, stop letting your past keep you from taking that next step. Stop letting Satan tell you because you did that sin that one time that you can't ever be used by God. Stop letting your past paralyze you. Instead let that pain and the faithfulness of Jesus propel you to take just one more step forward. Getting past your past is as simple as trusting Jesus enough to take one small step forward. Listen, I know you don't feel like you can take that step. I know you don't want to take that step. But... can you just trust in the love, mercy and faithfulness of Christ enough to try?

That step might be joining a small group, or beginning a d-group, or joining a team, or becoming a SCkids leader, or getting baptized, or coming to the NEXT class, or becoming a covenant partner, or committing to tithing 10 percent, or committing to tithe 2 percent. That

step might be giving your husband another chance, or it might be taking a break from your boyfriend to focus on your relationship with Christ, or to forgive your boss who fired you. That step might be deciding to read a verse of the Bible a day, or to start praying 5 minutes a day, or to start a prayer journal, or to serve the homeless once a month. That step might be to take your painful past and use what you've learned to help someone in the same situation to get past it. Regardless of what the next small step is... don't look at your past pain and stall out... look at the faithfulness of your Lord and step up. Are you trusting in your past pain more than your Lord? **Your Past Can Only Hold You Back As Long As You Choose To Trust In It More Than The Mercy And Love Of Christ**

Conclusion

I want to close with these words written by a woman named Donna. It's a poem called "Changing the Past" and it says this... The past is the past for a reason. That is where it is supposed to stay, But some cannot let it go. In their heads it eats away Until all their focus becomes, The person they used to be, The mistakes they made in their life. Oh, if only they could see That you cannot change what happened, No matter how hard you try, No matter how much you think about it, No matter how much you cry. What happens in your lifetime, Happens for reasons unknown, So you have to let the cards unfold. Let your story be shown. Don't get wrapped up in the negative. Be happy with what you have been given. Live for today not tomorrow. Get up, get out, and start living, Because the past is the past for a reason. It's been, and now it is gone, So stop trying to think of ways to fix it. It's done, it's unchangeable; move on. **Your Past Can Only Hold You Back As Long As You Choose To Trust In It More Than The Mercy And Love Of Christ**