

# Philippians 3:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

## Analysis

**Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before** (ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ ἐμαυτὸν οὐ λογίζομαι κατειληφέναι· ἐν δέ, τὰ μὲν ὅπισω ἐπιλανθανόμενος τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος, adelphoi, egō emauton ou logizomai kateilēphenai; hen de, ta men opisō epilanthanomenos tois de emprosthen epekeinomenos)—Adelphoi ("brothers") marks solemnity. Ou logizomai kateilēphenai ("I do not count myself to have apprehended") reinforces v. 12's humility. Hen de ("but one thing")—singular focus. Two participles describe this focus: epilanthanomenos ("forgetting") ta opisō ("things behind")—past achievements/failures don't define; epekeinomenos ("stretching forward") tois emprosthen ("things ahead")—like runner straining toward finish. This athletic imagery (common in Paul: 1 Cor 9:24-27; 2 Tim 4:7) pictures focused, forward-oriented pursuit. No looking back—only pressing ahead.

## Historical Context

Ancient athletic contests (Olympics, Isthmian games) were prominent in Greco-Roman culture. Runners trained intensely, raced naked to minimize drag, stretched toward finish line. Paul applies this to Christian life: singular focus, abandoning past, straining forward. Forgetting 'things behind' includes both pre-conversion credentials (vv. 5-6) and post-conversion achievements—neither define identity or destiny. Only Christ and His call matter (v. 14).

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. What 'things behind' (past sins or successes) do you need to forget to press forward?
2. How does 'one thing I do' challenge cultural multitasking and divided attention?
3. What does 'stretching forward' (epekteinomenos) look like practically in pursuing Christ?

## Interlinear Text

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ἀδελφοί ἐγώ ἐμαυτὸν οὐ λογίζομαι κατειληφέναι.

Brethren I myself not count to have apprehended  
G80 G1473 G1683 G3756 G3049 G2638

Ἐν δὲ τὰ μὲν ὅπίσω ἐπιλανθανόμενος  
this one thing and those things which are behind I do forgetting  
G1520 G1161 G3588 G3303 G3694 G1950

τοῖς δὲ ἔμπροσθεν ἐπεκτεινόμενος  
G3588 and those things which are before reaching forth unto  
G1161 G1715 G1901

## Additional Cross-References

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**Luke 9:62** (Parallel theme): And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

**Philippians 3:12** (Parallel theme): Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

**Psalms 27:4** (Parallel theme): One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

**Philippians 3:8** (Parallel theme): Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

**Hebrews 6:1** (Parallel theme): Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

**Philippians 2:12** (Parallel theme): Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

**Luke 10:42** (Parallel theme): But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

**2 Peter 3:8** (Parallel theme): But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

**Psalms 45:10** (Parallel theme): Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

**2 Corinthians 5:16** (Parallel theme): Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.