



“And now I am no more in the world,
but these are in the world...” (John 17:11).

Use this recent news story to help your students see the relevance
of this week’s lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®
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SETTING ASIDE THE PAST

Partisan wrangling led to the longest federal government shutdown in our nation’s history. It finally came to an end last week—at least for a few days. The president and the Congress agreed to give themselves until February 15 to work out a deal that will keep the government in operation after that. The question is whether our representatives in the House, the Senate, and the White House can move past the invectives and posturing that have characterized their political shouting matches for so long.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Putting the past behind is hard for us. We see it in the political divide that caused the government shutdown. We see it in the cultural divide over poverty, race, gender, and so many other issues. For Paul, he once was separated from the church because of his strict adherence to religious ritual. He learned, that although his past accomplishments in Judaism were significant, his future lay in his relationship with Jesus.

1. How would you, as a Christian citizen, advise our representatives in Washington to move forward from the current impasse? What shared hopes for the future could convince both sides to put the past aside?
2. What place does personal, corporate, or even religious pride play in keeping us tethered to the past? What challenges to leave the past behind have you encountered? How did you overcome them?
3. When a church or Sunday School class experiences a decline in membership, what help in facing the future does today’s text provide? Considering such a situation, suggest some practical steps for trusting in God’s righteousness rather than in our own.

—Charles R. Boatman

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