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## **Sermon #2**

### **The focus scripture Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV)**

*13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

(Prayer for Illumination) Holy Spirit I welcome your presence. You are my teacher, my guide and my source of strength. I surrender my mind, my will and my emotions to you. Speak like only you can. Crucify my flesh and let your Spirit come alive. Illuminate hearts and minds. Have your way in -and through me, in Jesus Name Amen.

## **Introduction**

### **Sermon Title: Pressing Forward**

This is a popular text of scripture by the Apostle Paul. The emphasis is usually on “I press toward the goal to win the prize. This phrase is often use as motivation and encouragement as we strive to accomplish life’s goals, we set for ourselves.

I enjoy watching track and field races in the Olympics. It’s amazing how fast the Olympic athletes can run. Few people can achieve the kinds of speeds that Olympic athletes do. Runners train long and hard to compete. It takes a great deal of effort to be a world-class runner. Lots of practice and hard work is required to win the prized gold medal. That’s the way it is in the Christian life as well. Not that we are working to for salvation because that is not biblical.

The Apostle Paul in letter to the Philippians was about the difficulty of reaching these goals. He uses the imagery of a race. A runner who knows that his goal is to finish the race and not to look back. With this focus he pursues his goal intently. His goal is to win the prize for which God had called him in Christ Jesus. He wants to hear God call his name and summon him to the victory stand, where he will meet Jesus face-to-face and know him in perfect intimacy. Earthly prizes do not last. Eternal prizes do. The goal can never be realized on earth. It is a goal that pulls us heavenward. Corinthians 9:25: "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever."The Apostle Paul had the same expectation for the Christians in Philippi when he penned the letter to the Philippians. He used the race metaphorically to describe the life of a Christian.

### **Background and Context**

Paul the Apostle wrote this letter approximately A.D 61, from Rome during his imprisonment there. Roman imprisonment (AD 60-62). It was written to show his appreciation and love to the Philippians for their continued help and support, and also to encourage their growth. It seems clear that Paul is writing to persuade the Philippian believers to rejoice in and unite around the gospel. His central thought is simple: Only in Christ are real unity and joy possible. With Christ as your model of humility and service, you can enjoy a oneness of purpose, attitude and goal. A truth which Paul illustrates from his own life, and one the Philippians desperately need to hear as fellow workers in the Philippian church are at odds, hindering the work in proclaiming new life in Christ, because of this, Paul exhorts the church to be unified. Any prize that we may obtain here on Earth will not last forever. Only what is eternal will endure. Paul's words are simple: To win the eternal crown, we must exercise self-discipline.

### **Fallen Condition Focus**

- Letting go of the past-
- Taking your eyes off God.
- Division/ Disunity in the body of Christ

### **Redemptive Focus**

- Faith in Jesus is the only way through which we attain righteousness
- Nature of Christ is the standard which the Christian live
- Christian Maturity comes is knowing and growing in Christ.

### **Interrogative:**

What is holding you back? What distractions have you allowed to prevent from focusing on God. He is the only source of salvation for us. To be like Christ and to live a life of complete spiritual growth should be our goals as believers.

Points:

#### **1. Stop focusing on the past**

Stop Focusing on the Past- Past disappointments, hurt or pain, failed relationships etc. will hinder you from making the first step forward in making your dreams visions and aspirations a reality. In verse 13 Paul again makes it clear that he has not yet become completely like Christ, but he also tells us of the mindset that is necessary in order to press on. “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of yet; but one thing forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.” Despite being called to be like Christ, Christians still make mistakes. In Luke 9:62 Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” But we cannot look back. If we do, we'll get burdened down under the weight of past memories of failure. Paul's words encourage us to

remember what's behind and what's ahead. Don't allow yesterday's failures to derail your pursuit of the gold medal and the Lord Jesus. Your past can either be a launching pad or quick sand.

CL Lewis "You can't go back and change the beginning but you can start where you are and change the ending."

## **2. Your Now Presents Challenges-**

What you do now defines you. Good runners know that when they are competing in a race that they cannot look back or it will hinder them from doing their best. Forget the past. Don't let it hinder your progress as you press on today. You need to press forward with our purpose as the focal point. Change will only come about by applying a series of actions. The challenge is getting out of the negative mindset that is holding you back from moving forward. Every choice you have made and everything that has happened to you is why you are where you are today. Our past choices and experiences have shaped who you have become and ultimately who you are, for some of us, because we have not dealt with past we are stuck there and this is now a challenge for us in moving on. Let us throw off all the things that can hinder us and the things that can entangle us. The flesh is the obstacle that keeps us from achieving the goal. It keeps us from pushing toward the goal. The scripture tells us put no confidence in the flesh because it will fail you every time. To reach the end of the race, we must receive the heavenly prize that God has given us, which is Christ Jesus. To pursue Him in every area of our lives, we must cast off everything that hinders our relationship with God. We must always remember that we are to live in present with an eye to the future, but never in the past.

### 3. Pressing Forward Shifts Your Focus on the Goal

Focus all your energy on toward winning the race. Just as we exercise to keep physically fit, we need to train ourselves to study the word of God so that we can be spiritually fit. God is the only source of salvation for us. He has given us the power to become like Christ and to live a life of complete spiritual growth. The Christian life is one of total commitment to the will and purpose of God. We have to keep pressing. This requires dedication and determination. In verse 14, Paul emphasizes the motivation for running the race. "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." As you forget what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead, you must keep your eyes focused on the final goal which the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 1 Corinthians 9:24 also states, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win." "Success isn't matter of being the best and winning the race. Success is the matter of handling the worst and still finishing the race." Unknown. The decision I make today will determine if I stay on this path of success.

### Conclusion

As I come to a close as the Apostle Paul affirms what really matter in all of life is the passionate pursuit of Jesus Christ. He uses the imagery of a race. A runner who knows that his goal is to finish the race and not to look back. With this focus he pursues his goal intently. His goal is to win the prize for which God had called him in Christ Jesus. He wants to hear God call his name and summon him to the victory stand, where he will meet Jesus face-to-face and know him in perfect intimacy. Earthly prizes do not last. Eternal prizes do. The goal can never be realized on earth. It is a goal that pulls us heavenward. Corinthians 9:25: "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a

crown that will last forever.” In order for you to live like Christ, you must have the mind and attitude of Christ and the only way to know Christ’s mind is to know his word. An athlete will tell you that the difference between winning and losing is often the team’s attitude. Having the right attitude can make a team more competitive. It is also a crucial aspect of the spiritual life. Developing our character begins with God’s work in us. Growth requires self-discipline and obedience and concentration on our part. Revelation 3:21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

#### Closing Prayer

Father in the Name of Jesus. I thank you for your grace and mercy. Thank for your unmerited favor and most importantly I thank you for sending your Son Jesus to die on the cross for us. Because He rose again, we have life and have it more abundantly. I bless you and I glorify you in Jesus Name Amen.