

GO FORWARD!

Philippians 3:13 & 14

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INTRODUCTION:

Several times in the New Testament, we see the Christian life likened to a race. A classic passage is Hebrews 12:1 and 2:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Verse 1 uses the word **race**. The word race is not found in our text in Philippians 3, but we certainly can picture a race.

This is the righteous race.

This is the persistent pursuit.

When you and I are saved, we are not handed a bathrobe and a pair of slippers and told to sit down in the recliner of ease...rather, we are handed our running gear and told to get on our running shoes and report to the track.

Loren Richmond in Denver—runs in 100 mile marathons in the Rockies

Iron Man—triathalons (bike, swim, run)

The world's most difficult race—The Tour de France 3 weeks covering 2,235 miles through France, Belgium, Italy, Germany and Spain (Lance Armstrong a 7 time winner. His bike—Trek—is made in our town).

Look at verse 10 of Philippians 3. Paul had great credentials before he was saved (verses 4-6). But, Paul goes on to say that all of those things had to be thrown on the scrap pile of human accomplishment. He was forgetting those things which were behind. He knew that he couldn't rely

on his own righteousness. He had to count all his "gain" as loss! (Read verses 7-9) Paul's new goal is **to win Christ**. (v.8)

Christ-likeness was the prize Paul was striving for! Verse 14 uses the word, **MARK**. This is the Greek word, SKOPOS- we get our English word "scope" from this word. SKOPOS is "a distant mark looked at- the goal or end one has in view." This is the Goal of Godliness! In "Paul's scope" he was looking at the goal of godliness.

Every believer is given Christ's righteousness (Justification) instantly at the moment of salvation...but, Christ-likeness (Sanctification) is something we must pursue. It is something we must focus on and have as our goal. I want to admonish all us "to reach forth" and "to press toward"...to GO FORWARD!

The direction of the saints of God is always onward, and forward, and upward! God's army is never ordered to retreat. ("We're on the Winning Side" Matt. 16:18)

The Christian's transmission is without a **reverse**. Before we pray and commit this message to God, let me quote Exodus 14:15. **"And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:"** (Exodus 14:15) God's orders were to GO FORWARD. God's marching orders haven't changed.

PRAYER

1. WITH A DESTINATION Verses 12-14

You'll never get anywhere until you realize you're not there yet! Paul, as godly as he was, realized that he hadn't arrived. This is the thought in verse 12. **ATTAINED** means "to lay hold of." Paul knew that spiritual maturity was out in front of him yet...it was something he had to keep aiming at, focusing on and reaching for! He hadn't laid hold of it yet. **APPREHEND** means "to obtain, to seize." We use this term today this way-- "The police apprehended the criminal and have him in custody." In other words, they captured him, they got a hold of him! We are to capture **THE PRIZE**. (Verse 14)

This prize was a term used of the award given to the victor in the games. The Christian is reaching forth for the heavenly rewards awarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ for Christian character and Christ-like virtues. **The awards are not handed out here! This is why we must be**

reaching forth and pressing toward this prize all through our Christian lives!!

Go Forward With A Destination! Our destination here is not heaven! The context is Christ-likeness, Christian maturity. **Perfect** in verse 12 is not referring to sinless perfection. This is the word **Teleios** and means "brought to its end, finished, full grown, mature, brought to completeness!" None of us are Perfect!!

Heroes of the Faith were not perfect. List of faults, sins, self-perceived weaknesses, before & after salvation!! (From Evangelist Harold Vaughn)

NOAH got drunk/ ABRAHAM was too old/ ISAAC was a daydreamer/

JACOB was a liar/ JOSEPH was abused/ MOSES couldn't speak/
GIDEON was afraid/ SAMPSON had long hair!/ RAHAB was a prostitute/TIMOTHY was too young/ DAVID committed adultery/
ELIJAH was suicidal/ JONAH ran from God/ NAOMI was a widow/
JOB went bankrupt/JOHN the Baptist ate bugs/PETER denied Christ/
The Disciples fell asleep while praying/ MARTHA worried about everything/ MARY MAGDALENE was demon possessed/

The SAMARITAN WOMAN was divorced...more than once!!/
ZACCHEUS was too small/ PAUL persecuted Christians/ TIMOTHY had an ulcer/

AND LAZARUS WAS DEAD!!!!

Is God finished with you yet?! For a Biblical answer to that question, go to Philippians 1:6. "**Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:**" Then, look at Philippians 2:13. "**For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.**"

Too often the Christian is satisfied with where he is at spiritually!

Christian growth is put on hold, the transmission is put in neutral, the sneakers are kicked off and the slippers are put on...and the lethargic Christian pulls the lever on his recliner so he can prop his

feet up!

Going forward to the destination of Christ-likeness is no longer a priority!! Paul thought it was a priority..."THIS ONE THING I DO!" The Christian gets to the place where he is satisfied with the mediocre! Going through the motions mechanically replaces performing at our best!

The FINISHER is Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:2 tells us to be...**looking unto Jesus!** Focus on the Finisher. Conformity to Christ is your goal. Christ-likeness is your destination.

1. WITH A DESTINATION Verses 12-14

2. WITHOUT DISTRACTION Verse 13

The Christian running toward the finish line of maturity- must not look back. One of Satan's attacks is to get the believer to look back! What is a major distraction of the devil? **Your past!**

I like the saying I recently saw on a Christian T shirt- "**The next time the Devil reminds you of your past-remind him of his future!**" "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Revelation 20:10) Have you ever noticed that the devil doesn't remind us of our future?!! ("Hey, Christian- did you know that you're going to go to heaven when you die?!")

Nothing can be done to change the past. Too many believers are living in the past. Paul said, "forgetting those things which are behind!" The Greek word for forgetting means, "given over to oblivion." I love a phrase from a Gospel song...it goes- "In the Sea of God's Forgetfulness- that's good enough for me. Praise God, my sins are gone!" (Gone into oblivion)

Looking back is dangerous for the runner!

"Those things which are behind"...forget them!

Forget about yesterday's sins, mistakes and failures. "WHAT IF!!!"

Forget about the past faults and past failures of others. "IF ONLY!!!"

Forget about what's behind, because it will only get you behind!

One great distraction is **our past**. Another great distraction is **our peers**.

Looking to other Christians can most often be very detrimental. (Quote 1st verse of Looking Unto Jesus"—We often fix our eyes upon a Christian friend, and then too soon we learn on him we can't depend. So fix your eyes on Him, the Beginning and the End, and look alone to Jesus Christ."

The backslidden can be a stumblingblock

The bitter Christian can be a defilement Hebrews 12:15

The carnal, disgruntled believer can cause disunity

Yes, we are to be examples: I Timothy 4:12 says, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." I Peter 5:3 says, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." **We all need to be examples to one another, so that we can edify one another!** However, it is dangerous to get your eyes off of Jesus Christ- and on to men. Don't pedestalize people!!! Let's all turn to a very important verse in II Corinthians 10:12

Hebrews 12:2 has the idea of fixing or fastening your eyes on Christ! After all- He is the Finisher. He is standing at the finish line cheering us on. He is the Perfect Pattern. He is the Sinless One. Only Jesus Christ will never disappoint you. The very best of Christians will disappoint you.

Now, II Corinthians 10:12. "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." This is an extremely important principle. **Don't be distracted by your past or by your peers!** Measuring your life by the life of another Christian is a false measurement! No- we are to measure up to Christ!!

1. **WITH A DESTINATION** Verses 12-14

2. **WITHOUT DISTRACTION** Verse 13 **GO FORWARD!!**

3. **WITH DETERMINATION** Verses 13 and 14

Two phrases here in our text show the determination that must be present if Christ-likeness is going to be attained! If you are going to attain- "lay hold of" the prize...if you are going to apprehend, or "seize" the maturity God wants you to have...then, you must have grit and you mustn't quit!!

The first phrase is "reaching forth" in verse 13. This word shows great effort! It actually means "to stretch out or stretch forward." You see the runner straining and stretching at the finish line to break the tape first. This first phrase shows **ENERGY**. How much energy are you putting in to your Christian life...in to your pursuit of Christ-likeness?? "And beside this, **giving all diligence**, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; (2 Peter 1:5)

The second phrase is "I press toward" in verse 14. The word **press** means to "run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing." Figuratively, it shows one in a race who is running swiftly to reach the goal. When I think of this word, I think of a hunt! The hunter is persistently staying on the trail of his prey until it is caught! This second phrase shows **ENDURANCE**.

Great example from history of ENDURANCE: Thomas A. Edison patented 1,093 inventions. He often worked 20 hours a day!! He famous saying, "Genius is 1 % inspiration and 99 % perspiration."

Edison: The invention of the light bulb is a classic example of endurance and determination.

Countless experiments using an endless number of different materials. He had men searching in China, Japan, South America, Asia, Jamaica, Ceylon, and Burma, for fibers and grasses to be tested. Second story lab above his garage (When something would fail, he would toss it out the window into a pile. This pile eventually reached up to the second story.) On October 21, 1879, after 13 months of repeated failures--he succeeded in his search for a filament that would stand the stress of electric current. His work was just beginning! Now, he had to get the strand inside a glass tube. Everything kept going wrong. But, Edison refused to admit defeat. Just before he got the light bulb to work for the first time, he had stayed up for two days and two nights

without sleep. When the current finally was turned on in his vacuum-sealed bulb, he said, "The sight we had so long desired to see finally met our eyes." **Aren't you glad for Edison's energy and endurance?!**

We are supposed to GO FORWARD!! Charles H. Spurgeon said, "By perseverance the snail reached the ark." We are supposed to PLOW AHEAD! The Lord Jesus Christ said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62) The Apostle Paul said, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Galatians 6:9)

OUR GREATEST EXAMPLE WAS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!! He endured the cross, and despised the pain!!! Don't Quit!!

CONCLUSION:

Christian, GO FORWARD!!! Go forward to Christian maturity.

Become a TELEIOS Christian- finished, completed, mature!

Are you there yet? Well, if you aren't- don't just stand there!!! Get your running shoes on! Get going!!!

Go forward with your destination clearly in view.

Go forward without distractions...don't look at your past or your peers.

And go forward with determination, realizing that energy and endurance are needed if the goal of godliness is going to be reached.

GO FORWARD

SALVATION: Verse 9 Not having mine own righteousness

Not by the law, but by faith in Christ