

**GO FORWARD!**  
Philippians 3:13 & 14

Evangelist Doug Lowery



**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, (spiritually speaking) we are handed our running gear and told to get on our running shoes and report to the track.

- ❖ The Iron Man race is held annually on the big island of Hawaii. This brutal test of endurance begins with swimming 2.4 miles in the current of the ocean, then jumping on a bike and riding it over steep terrain for 112 miles, and then running a 26:2 mile marathon. This race begins at 7:30 in the morning, and you have to finish by midnight or your time is thrown out!
- ❖ The world's most difficult race by far is the Tour de France. This mother of all races stretches out over three weeks, covering 2,235 miles through France, Belgium, Italy, Germany and Spain. Lance Armstrong is famous for winning this grueling race 7 years in a row!!

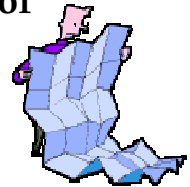
**Most Christians (because of age, weight, lack of conditioning, or physical infirmity) could never think of competing in either of these races; but, in a spiritual sense, we are all to be running the race set before.**

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! Paul, through this spiritual scope, was looking at the distant goal of Christ-likeness. May godliness be our goal!

Every believer is given Christ's righteousness (Justification) instantly at the moment of salvation; but, Christ-likeness (Sanctification) is something we must pursue. We do not earn salvation, but we gain sanctification as we exercise ourselves unto godliness. We must focus on sanctification as our goal! I want to admonish all us "to reach forth" and "to press toward" the prize of being like Christ. 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 and His marching orders haven't changed.



## PRAYER

### Go Forward

#### 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 seized him! We are to capture **THE PRIZE of Christ-likeness.** (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 in the Old and New Testaments were not perfect. Look at this list of faults, sins, or self-perceived weaknesses, before & after salvation!! The following is from Evangelist Harold Vaughn, who leads Prayer Advances

across our country: 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 broke his Nazarite vows/ RAHAB was a prostitute/ DAVID committed adultery/ ELIJAH was suicidal/ JONAH ran from God/ NAOMI was bitter/ 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 was too young and 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! We put our Christian growth on hold, put our "spiritual transmission" in neutral, kick off our running shoes and put on our slippers—and we fall into the recliner of apathy and ease. Going forward to the destination of Christ-likeness is no longer a priority!! Paul thought it was a priority..."THIS ONE THING I DO!" Often we get to the place that we are satisfied with mediocrity. Going through the motions mechanically replaces performing at our best!

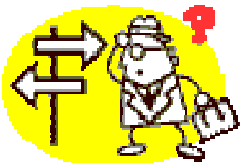
The FINISHER is Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:2 tells us to be **looking unto Jesus!** Focus on the Finisher. Conformity to Christ is your goal. Christ-likeness is your destination.

## Go Forward

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? In the context, verse 13 tells us that a major distraction is **Your past!!**



I like the saying I recently saw on the back of a T-shirt- "**The next time the Devil reminds you of your past-remind him of his future!**" That saying takes on

great significance when we know Satan's 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: "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!** Many runners have stumbled, fallen to the track, and lost—because they looked back.

"Those things which are behind"...forget them! Forget about all of yesterday's sins, mistakes and failures. **Don't live your life dominated by these two phrases: "WHAT IF!!" and "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.

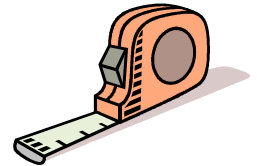
(Verse one of "Looking Unto Jesus" (a song I wrote way back in January of 1972) — "We often fix our eyes upon a Christian friend, and then too soon we learn on him we can't depend. So fix your eyes on Him, the Beginning and the End, and look alone to Jesus Christ."

The backslidden can be a stumblingblock to the believer who is striving to grow; the bitter Christian can be a defilement (Hebrews 12:15) if you get your eyes on the bitter saint; and the carnal, disgruntled believer can pollute you with his worldly and selfish spirit.

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. Do not put other believers up on a spiritual pedestal! 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. He is the only One Who 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!!



There are many other distractions that could be mentioned. Let me quickly name two more that begin with the letter "P."

Our possessions—or, more often, other's possessions. (Materialism, covetousness) We focus on money and what it can buy and lose sight of our real goal. We have to have the latest technology, the best gadgets, the pricey name brands! We get discontent (instead of being thankful) with what we have when we start coveting the nicer things others have.

Worldly pleasures. Or, we get enamored by the flashing lights and sights and sounds of this world—and get drawn off the track. There are fleshly, sinful pleasures that we must avoid to be godly. Then, there is clean fun. There is nothing wrong with fun and playing games or being involved in recreation; but, often believers get caught up in the pleasure-mad-mentality of our age. Be careful of possessions and pleasures and remember the words of Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:4— *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

## Go Forward

1. WITH A DESTINATION Verses 12-14
2. WITHOUT DISTRACTION Verse 13 **GO FORWARD!!**
3. **WITH DETERMINATION** Verses 13 and 14



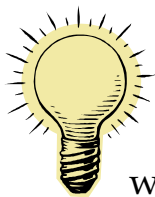
Two phrases here in our text show the determination that must be present if Christ-likeness is going to be attained! If you are going to attain ("lay hold of") the prize, and if you are going to apprehend (or "seize") the maturity God wants you to have—then you must have grit and you must not quit.



The first phrase is "reaching forth" in verse 13. This word shows great effort! It actually means "to stretch out or stretch forward." You picture 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 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  
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. He experimented with 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. He worked on this project in a 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 window! 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?! Let me draw a spiritual analogy to this wonderful quote. The sight that we have so long desired is the face of Jesus Christ! Some day we will see Him face to face, and our quest for Christ-likeness will be over, because 1 John tells us, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* (3:2) Yes, some day the race will be over and we will cross the finish line and be glorified in His presence. We will not be little gods, because He will not share His glory with another, but we will be rid of our sinful nature!

Until then, 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) What an example of endurance was the Apostle Paul.

The next time you have a pit-party for yourself, read what Paul endured in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28:

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. (**A total 195 lashes during his ministry.**) Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

OUR GREATEST EXAMPLE WAS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!! He endured the cross, and despised the pain!!!

## Don't Quit

- A song by Doug Lowery

Do not be weary in well doing, says the Lord,  
For your labor I surely will reward.  
Be ye steadfast, unmoving—never faint,  
For God honors the enduring saint.

Elijah moaned as he sat beneath a tree,  
"God I'm all alone, there's no one left but me."  
Then God said to Him in a still, small voice,  
"Seven thousand still make Me their choice."

Jesus did not quit all throughout His ministry,  
 For He would not stop 'til He reached Calvary.  
 He endured the Cross—and became the Finisher.  
 So then follow, be a conqueror.

Chorus:

Don't quit, there's a job to be done.  
 Don't quit, there's a race to be run.  
 Don't quit, there's a crown to be won.  
 Don't quit, weary Christian, 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.

SALVATION: Verse 9 Not having mine own righteousness  
 Not by the law, but by faith in Christ

If you have never asked Jesus Christ to be your Savior, you must see that your "righteousnesses" are filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) in God's sight. Cast away your filthy rags and ask Christ to clothe you with His flawless robe. It is His total righteousness that we need! Seek the cleansing of your sin with the blood of Christ and you will be washed as white as snow. (Isaiah 1:18) Repent and believe the glorious gospel of Christ.

