

15 | PHILIPPIANS 3:10-16

PRESSING ON TO THE PRIZE

Running our race without complacency

Outline

1. RUN WITH AMBITION (3:10-11).

A Personal Ambition

A Knowledge of Appropriation: By Faith

A Knowledge of Transformation

A Powerful Ambition

A Passionate Ambition

A Prayerful Ambition

What is Certain

What is Not Certain

2. RUN WITH ENDURANCE (3:12-14).

Enduring with A Proper View of the Present

Paul is Humble

Paul is Hungry

Enduring with A Proper View of the Past

Enduring with A Proper View of the Future

The Pain

The Prize

3. RUN WITH GRACE (3:15-16).

Grace to Engage

Grace to Persevere

Call to Worship: Psalm 63:1-3

- ¹ O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you;
 my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you,
 as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- ² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
 beholding your power and glory.
- ³ Because your steadfast love is better than life,
 my lips will praise you.

Announcements

1. Welcome **visitors!**
2. Join us for our **Connect Class** for those **exploring membership**. It'll be meeting during the Sunday School hour April 28, May 5, 12, & 19.
3. **Work Day:** this Saturday from 8am to 1pm. Come when you can. Cleaning out attic and children's rooms, nursery, nursing mothers' room.

Introduction

The title of our message is "Pressing on to the Prize." One of our greatest enemies in life is complacency.

What is complacency?

According to the Oxford Dictionary...

com·pla·cen·cy /kəm'plāsənsē/:

a feeling of smug or uncritical satisfaction with oneself or one's achievements.

Paul is sitting in a rented home under house arrest, chained to one of Caesar's elite guards. He's there 24/7 stuck in Rome. He can't go anywhere. But he says, I'm running a race. I'm not satisfied. I'm not complacent. I want more!!!! Let's read about it.

Complacency is defined by the dictionary as a "smug satisfaction." It's to look at your life. Saying "I've achieved enough. I'm doing ok. I'm doing enough." Paul's going to give us the remedy.

Now remember, Paul is in shackles under house arrest in Rome. His friend, the pastor of the church at Philippi, Epaphroditus is with Paul as he's writing this letter. He's going to bring the letter of Philippians back to Philippi. And Paul gives us some amazing verses about running the race and gaining the prize.

Maybe someone should remind Paul that he's in prison. Paul says: we need to run the race! We need to endure! We need to press on to the prize. Listen to this man who hated complacency. Paul might have been shackled, but he knew the Gospel is unshackled.

Scripture Reading

Let's stand and read Philippians 3:10-16,

3:10-16 | ...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not

consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

This is God's Word.

Outline

How do we press on? Persevere? Paul's desire was to know Christ and to be like him. How can I run my race with great joy?

- Run with **Ambition**
- Run with **Endurance**
- Run with **Grace**

1. RUN WITH AMBITION (3:10-11).

3:10-11 | ...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Church Connected to the Jews

In the church of Philippi, as well as many of the other churches scattered throughout the Roman Empire, the churches were connected to believing Jews because that's how Paul would start his church planting endeavors. He would begin in the synagogue. Sadly, there were some of the Jews that didn't think it was enough to know Christ alone. They wanted to add to what Christ did. Paul talks about these kinds of false teachers and compares them to wild "**dogs**" who had selfish motives and lives that were evil and not holy (3:2). Our joy is not to increase in religious knowledge, but to know Christ. That's what Paul says was his personal ambition.

A PERSONAL AMBITION

3:10a | ...that I may know him...

A Knowledge of Appropriation: By Faith

What a wonderful ambition: to know Christ! We cannot know God the Father except through Christ (Jn 14:6). And Paul had an objective faith in a righteousness outside of himself. That's where we must be unshakable in our assurance. It is by grace we are saved through faith in Christ: his righteousness, his substitutionary atonement on the cross. He bore the full wrath of God for us. Hallelujah!

Objective Knowledge of Faith

Therefore, to know Christ, we must **come to him by an objective faith**. We must surrender to who he is and what he has done: his **person and work** (cf 3:8-9).

I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that

comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (3:8-9).

We come through his righteousness, and not our own. We come as sinners to a righteous God who is willing to make us righteous through the blood of Christ.

Do you know him? Have you come to this wonderful realization that you come to a holy and perfectly righteous God in all the rags of your sins? Are you trusting and fully abiding in him? Are you righteous today in with an alien righteousness? Do you stand before God in the righteousness of Christ? You come by faith.

Subjective Knowledge of Faith

Possessing Christ's righteousness by faith was not an end but in fact for Paul was the starting point... indeed how could anyone ever get satiated with our infinite Redeemer? Never.

Paul's emphasis here is on gaining a deeper knowledge and intimacy with Christ. Having been converted, Paul suddenly had a new hunger and ambition in life. He wasn't studying books about doctrine or systematic theology because there was none. Upon conversion, he wanted not just to know his faith rested objectively in the death of Christ, but **subjectively** in a relationship with Christ. He knows him, but he wants to know him better!

Clarification

To understand the difference between an objective and subjective faith, consider your parents. Objectively you know that they will always be your parents. There is a biological tie to them. Now subjectively, you may do something to hurt their hearts. They may need to correct you. They may need to discipline you. But you are still their child. So it is with our relationship with Christ. Through objective faith, you are born again into God's family. No one and nothing can change that. "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ. Our faith is in Christ alone and we are assured of his righteousness and perfection. That can never change. But our relationship with God on a practical level changes all the time. There is a subjectivity to our intimacy with Christ. Sin can get in the way of our communion and intimacy with God. Objectively our standing is absolutely perfect for those whose faith is in Christ. But subjectively, our progress at times will be interrupted. We will progress. Of course, he promises to keep us from falling away (Jude 1:24-25). But there are times we may need correction. Like a good Father, God will guide his children home. He may need to correct us, but he will never stop being our good, good Father.

3:10a | ...that I may know him...

There's an intimacy, a revelation of Christ to every child of God that needs to grow and grow and grow. Paul says to the Galatians:

I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. ¹²For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:11-12).

Definition

The word “to know” is not merely intellectual, but to know intimately, to know the finest details, to feel or touch, to appropriate and understand the weight of knowing that person.¹ The idea is “that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Christ, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of his Person more strongly and more clearly” (Amplified Bible).

Spurgeon writes...

Paul means, “That I may know him more than I now do;” for he knew him ...but he felt as if he had not begun really to know Christ. He was like a child at school, who has learnt to read and to write, and knows so much that he begins to want to know more. –C. H. Spurgeon

From the moment of his conversion on, the purpose of Paul’s life was “that I may know him” (3:10). If he already knows Christ, why does he want to know him who he already knows? The answer is that he wants to know Christ more deeply and have a more intimate relationship with him. He wants to learn more of his teaching and draw closer to his heart. He wants to enter into a closer, experiential fellowship, a more intimate communion.

A Knowledge of Transformation

We have the same desire of Enoch of old in the Bible.

Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him (Gen 5:24).

Enoch had such a close walk with God, that God translated him directly to heaven without dying. Wouldn’t that be amazing. We want to be transformed into his likeness. I wish it could happen like Enoch, but Paul tells us how transformation comes in 2 Corinthians 3. Walking with Christ transforms us.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18).

The more we know Christ, the more we are transformed into his likeness (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29-30). We are called to grow in knowing Christ. Paul, though he was a mature man of God, was like a school boy when it came to knowing Christ. He felt like he was just getting started.

We must be like the woman with the issue of blood who touched the hem of Jesus garment. She wasn’t content to be like the throngs around him but pushed through the crowd to touch his garment. And power went out of him. That’s what we need. Push through child of God. Whatever trial; whatever difficulty. Don’t let it stop you from knowing Christ deeper. Don’t let the world stop you from touching him. You need to feel his virtue healing you.

¹ Joseph Barber Lightfoot, ed., *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians*, Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1913), 150.

The personal ambition of every Christian is to know Christ. We know him objectively, but we want to know him personally and subjectively, applied to our own lives.

More than a Photograph

It's like the difference between seeing a photograph and knowing the real person. You can possibly see a ton of video and photos of my wife and see and know more about her scientifically and aesthetically. You can study what she's done or written or said. But no one can know her like I know her as my wife. No one is a friend to her like I am. No one can know her in marriage like I know her. We have a one flesh union. We know the highs and lows the failures and victories.

You can say you know Christ and have scientific knowledge, but do you know him intimately? Are you walking with him?

Now intimate knowledge must come first from objective knowledge. You cannot know him intimately until you first know him objectively, that is you know who he is, his person, and what he has done, his work.

But now knowing him, I want to know him better. That's my highest personal ambition.

A POWERFUL AMBITION

Paul says, my personal ambition is: *I want to know him*. How Paul? In what way? "I want to know him and..."

3:10b | ... the power of his resurrection...

This ambition of knowing Christ is not only personal, but it's **powerful**. Our faith in Christ is lived out in supernatural power. Dear ones, the same Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in us. Paul talks about this resurrection power for every Christian in Ephesians as "the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead" (Eph 1:19-20).

I don't have to think anything is separating me from knowing Christ: I can't say that sin on Satan or my family or my own weakness is keeping me from knowing him fully. In Christ, I have the **power of the resurrection**. In that **power** there is **no weakness**. I can live the victorious Christian life in the power of the resurrection of Christ. The only thing separating me from a consistent Christian life is a daily surrender to that power found in Christ by faith.

Dear saint: you are guaranteed victory in this life. There is no sin Christ did not die to conquer in you.

A PASSIONATE AMBITION

3:10c | ...and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...

This ambition has one passion: die to this world and live to God. Now, what does that mean—how do I become "like him in his death"? It doesn't mean that you could die for sinners. He died alone; nobody could do that for him. But, what it means is that, when he died for me—listen carefully—I died with him. His death had my name on it. And, if I want to know him, I have to say no to me and yes to him. I have to die to myself. I have to die with Christ. I have to be buried with Christ, that I might be raised with Christ. I want to know him personally. I want to say yes to Christ and no to me.

Someone said it this way: “When self is on the throne, Christ is on the cross. When self is on the cross, Christ is on the throne” (Adrian Rogers).

A PRAYERFUL AMBITION

3:11 | ...that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Until the resurrection from the dead, we are called to “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). It’s a prayer. **I want to walk like I’m going to rise!**

What is Certain

Paul’s prayer is that he might be ready at the second coming of Jesus, when God raises all his people from the dead. Paul was awaiting that moment when:

⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed... ⁵⁴ ... then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:52, 54; cf Hos 13:14).

Paul knows what is certain: the resurrection of the dead. The dead in Christ shall rise! What is uncertain is the pathway there. Our resurrection from the dead is certain at Jesus’ second coming. We know that for certain. Paul knew that for certain.

Jesus taught this truth: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live even if he dies” (Jn 11:25). Christ promised his disciples, “Because I live, you will live also” (Jn 14:19). It is the resurrection of Jesus that gives us such a glorious prospect beyond the grave.

What is Not Certain

What is not certain is the means by which he brings us. It’s like Job said: “...he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold” (Job 23:10). We don’t know the way and the means he takes us, but he know!

Until the resurrection from the dead, we are called to “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). It’s a prayer. **I want to walk like I’m going to rise!**

I’m not certain of all the trials and tribulations I have in front of me, but I know who is with me, and ***I want to walk today like I’m going to rise when Jesus comes.***

Christianity is a Lens, Not a List

So Paul says, I want to know Christ in power, being alive to God, and in Christ’s suffering and death, being dead to the world. In everything that happens, I see Christ!

“**By whatever means possible**, I am looking forward to the resurrection when Jesus comes again.” For Paul Christianity is a lens, not a list.

We come to our lives and whether we are caring for the children until they fall asleep in our arms, or we go to our job and work hard we seek to know Christ and his glory in everything.

It’s not like I have God at the top of my list and then I’m done. God is on every part of my list, so that by **whatever means possible**, I am looking to that trumpet sound when I see Jesus.

C.S. Lewis said it this way:

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." –C.S. Lewis²

I see all things through the lens of knowing Christ. If I'm changing a diaper or rocking a child to sleep, driving to work, or figuring out a job for my boss, I see all things by the light of knowing Christ. I want to know him. I'm alive to God and dead to this world.

2. RUN WITH ENDURANCE (3:12-14).

3:12-14 | Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. **But one thing I do:** forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul is not complacent when it comes to his Christian life. Remember, he's under house arrest in Rome. He's got shackles on. But he compares his life to running a race. Maybe someone should tell Paul he's in prison. He should be more realistic. But Paul won't have any of it. He says I press on toward the goal for the prize of Jesus. I want to know Jesus and do his will.

The Christian life is so difficult. How can I run so as to win the race? I can never do it in my own strength. How can I run with endurance?

ENDURING WITH A PROPER VIEW OF THE PRESENT

Paul has a powerful way of getting rid of complacency in his life. He knows he's perfect in Christ, but he's not yet perfect in this life. He's perfect in Christ, but he knows he falls far short of that perfection in this life.

Paul says in verse 9: I'm perfect in Christ. But here in verse 12, he says: I'm not perfect. Which is it Paul?

Paul is Humble

3:12a | Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect...

Paul has been made perfect in the righteousness of Christ (3:9), right? Why does he say I'm not already perfect? Paul I'm confused. Paul is positionally righteous in Christ, just like you are, amen. That means all your sin is forgiven: past, present, and future. That's good news isn't it! That's the Gospel: Jesus died for my sins. "There's now therefore no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). For God's children, the good news really is good news. It's the best news ever. The rest of the world yawns at the Gospel, but God's children shout and dance. We rejoice at the good news.

So why does Paul say, "I'm not already perfect"? It's because while he's positionally perfect and righteous in Christ (justification), he's in a **process** of being made **practically righteous**

² C.S. Lewis, *Weight of Glory: And Other Addresses* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1976), 140.

in this life. Each day we are being conformed more and more to look like Jesus in our hearts and lives. That's sanctification.

So when it comes to his sanctification: Paul is not satisfied. He's not complacent. We must never think we are anywhere near where God wants us to be in the Christian life. Despite having seen Christ in visions, been taught direct revelation from him, and walked closely with him in suffering, Paul says, It's "not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect..." (3:12a). Paul says: *I want **perfection**, but I'm still so far from it. I have not already obtained perfect knowledge of Christ.* Paul says this in other places, that in this life we "we see in a mirror dimly," but one day we will see Christ "face to face" (**1 Cor 13:12**).

We must always have a humble view of where we are. I think of the great evangelist George Whitefield. Around his 54th birthday, after making it through a dangerous storm on a ship, George Whitefield wrote in his diary, "Oh, to begin to be a Christian."³ That's his goal. He had been preaching for over 30 years and was greatly used of God. But at 54 years, he says, "I want to begin to be a Christian."

Paul is Hungry

3:12b | but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

At present Paul says, "I press on..." Like an athlete wanting to win a championship, Paul is never satisfied with where he is. "I press on!" He's hungry! I press on to "make it my own" or "to seize the **perfection of knowing Christ**". *I want to seize the one who seized me. I reach after Christ who has reached me!*

Paul says, "I press on to make it my own..." Make what his own? The **perfection of knowing Christ**. Paul wants to seize the **knowledge and relationship he will have with Christ** in the resurrection **right now**. On the day of Christ's second coming, we will know Christ perfectly. We should reach after Christ now in that way!

The verb translated **press on** (*diōkō*) is the same one Paul used in 3:6 to recall that he persecuted the church in his pre-conversion days. He persecuted or literally "pressed on" the church. With the same tenacity, Paul now "presses on" to know Christ. The same kind of commitment that once drove Paul on to stamp out Christianity now drove him on to proclaim it everywhere.⁴

So Paul says: *I want to seize Christ the way he seized me!* Paul had one consuming passion: *I want to take hold of Christ the way he took hold of me* I want to embrace the one who embraced me! He's made me his own, and I want to live like Christ is my own.

Paul is **hungry**: I want to seize him who seized me!

In the present life, we are pressing on, driven to know Christ and seize him who seized us. That's our goal. Do you remember the way Christ took hold of you? He wants you to take hold of him. That's what we are to do now in the **present**. But what about the past? Sometimes the past can slow us down.

³ John Gillies, *Memoirs of the life of the Reverend George Whitefield* (Ann Arbor, MI: Text Creation Partnership, 2009), 246.

⁴ John Phillips, *Exploring Ephesians & Philippians: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Php 3:12b.

ENDURING WITH A PROPER VIEW OF THE PAST

3:13 | Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead...

While I'm looking to seize Christ, Paul says, "Brothers, I do not consider that I have fully made Christ my own." He's made me his own! Glory to God! But I've not yet fully made him my own. I want that more than anything, but I'm not there yet.

I haven't fully seized Christ. I'm not there yet. So what should I do? Should I bemoan this fact? Should I be in despair?

No! This **one thing I do**: I forget the past. I have to **forget what lies behind**. While the verb rendered **forgetting** (*epilanthanomai*) can refer to having no memory of something, here the verb has the softer sense of pay no attention to.⁵

After all, Paul has just finished listing his past accomplishments (3:5–6). These past accomplishments are among **what lies behind**.⁶ His persecution of the church and great failures of Christ are also **what lies behind**.

Jesus said, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:62). The runner in a race cannot afford to look back. He will lose his speed, lose his direction, and, if he is not careful, lose the race. This is not an easy assignment for any of us. It is the result of a decision we make. We simply decide that we will not be controlled by our past.⁷

What was done was done! Both the heartache of the former life and nostalgia of the "good ole days" of his Christian life would paralyze him in terms of what God wanted in the future. Every day was a new adventure.⁸

Race Cars Have No Backup Camera

How do we apply this? Race cars have no backup camera. Don't get stuck in your failures. Don't rest on your victories.

First of all, we must forget our *failures*. If we look at our past failures as opportunities to learn and grow, then it is all right to remember them. If we allow them to fill us with despair and defeat, we must forget them. In other words, we may allow our failures to teach us but not to terrorize us.

But then, don't rest in your *victories*. Yesterday's power is not sufficient for this hour. When David was supposed to be out winning more victories he was at home, and his pride led him to great failure. Don't rest in your victories. Surge ahead to higher ground!

⁵ Matthew S. Harmon, *Philippians: A Mentor Commentary*, Mentor Commentaries (Great Britain; Ross-shire: Mentor, 2015), 356.

⁶ Harmon, 356.

⁷ David Jeremiah. *Count It All Joy: Discover a Happiness That Circumstances Cannot Change* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2016), 172-173.

⁸ Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 139.

ENDURING WITH A PROPER VIEW OF THE FUTURE

3:13b-14 | ... straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Not only to I forget the past, but I strain with all my might to the future. I strain forward to what lies ahead.... I exert myself to the uttermost.

The Pain

WORD PICTURE: Paul strains forward to the prize! This word “**strain forward**” is particularly graphic, bringing to mind the straining muscles, clear focus, and complete dedication of the runner in his race to the prize. Both mental and physical discipline were necessary⁹

The Prize

What’s the “prize”? What goal is Paul pursuing? Based on the previous passage, it’s a fuller knowledge of Christ. It involves gaining Christ. That’s what Paul wants—to know Christ more and more; and in knowing him more, he will become more like him. This pursuit is a lifetime adventure. To illustrate this pursuit, Paul uses athletic imagery to convey his passion for the Savior.

Be careful that you don’t adopt a passive attitude about the Christian life. Growth in Christlikeness isn’t an impassive stroll. The New Testament uses disciplined athletic imagery elsewhere to describe the effort involved in growing in Christ. Consider just two of them:

Don’t you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize. Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. However, they do it to receive a crown that will fade away, but we a crown that will never fade away. Therefore I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air. Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified. (1 Cor 9:24-27)

Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God’s throne. (Heb 12:1-2)

Now that’s passion! Running, exercising self-control, not running aimlessly, not boxing the air, disciplining one’s body—all of this displays the apostle’s passion.¹⁰

⁹ Melick, 139.

¹⁰ Ibid., 151.

3. RUN WITH GRACE (3:15-16).

We are called to run this race not only with patient endurance and ambition, but with grace. There are false teachers among them who want to legalize everything. We can't do that. Look how gentle Paul is with his fellow runners.

GRACE TO ENGAGE

3:15 | Let those of us who are mature think [*attitude*] this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.

He was always thinking about others in the race. In Paul's last words on the earth (book of 2 Timothy), Paul is thinking about all his brothers and sisters.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim 4:7-8).

Paul knew he was not running alone. Paul challenged the Philippians to come down from the grandstand and get in the race. Some of them, of course, were already in it and were doing well; he described them as “perfect”—that is, mature or initiated. Paul encouraged these faithful brethren to be of the same mind as himself: to forget what had already been attained, to set new goals, to run to achieve them, and to keep their eyes fixed on Christ.¹¹ Those who are truly mature will have this humble mindset. We've not yet attained, but we are hungry to get there.

Paul says to those who are “think otherwise” than running the race to get involved. Paul was so gracious in how he challenged them to get off the grandstands and get involved.

Are you maturing in Christ? Keep going! If not, get involved. Paul did not lay down any laws. He called those who are truly saved to run toward maturity, and he trusted God to reveal his will to every child of God. The Spirit of God is working in us to know him and the power of his resurrection.

Are you stuck in your spiritual life? Get involved. Let the Spirit lead you to an encourager. Let someone know you are struggling.

GRACE TO PERSEVERE

Are you running faithfully? Don't be discouraged.

3:16 | Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

¹¹ John Phillips, *Exploring Ephesians & Philippians: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Php 3:15–16.

Keep going. Life is short. We will be home soon, so so soon! Christ is worthy! “Don’t be weary in well doing” (Gal 6:9). By God’s grace we will, as Paul urged us, persevere. We will to **hold true to what we have attained**. “Hold true” (*stoicheo*) means “to walk in line with.” It is a military term that pictures soldiers marching in a row. The idea is to keep in step with what is required. The Philippian believers must march in formation with the word of God. They must stay in step with the same truths which Paul had earlier taught them.¹²

Let’s live what we say we believe. Christ has attained true and perfect righteousness for us and he possibility of a higher and holier walk with him. I’m not giving up. I want to seize him who seized me. My eye is no the prize!

Conclusion

In the 1986 New York City Marathon, almost 20,000 runners entered the race. What is memorable is not who won, but who finished last. His name was Bob Wieland. He finished 19,413th—dead last. Bob completed the New York marathon in 4 days, 2 hours, 47 minutes, and 17 seconds. It was unquestionably the slowest marathon in history—ever. So, what is it that made Bob Wieland’s marathon so special? Bob ran with his arms. 17 years earlier while in Vietnam, Bob’s legs were blown off in battle. He sits on a 15-pound saddle and covers his fists with pads. He uses his arms to catapult himself forward one arm-length at a time.

At his swiftest, Bob can run about a mile an hour, using his muscular arms to catapult his torso forward. He advances one “step” at a time. Bob Wieland finished four *days* after the start. What did it matter? Why bother to finish? There is a victory to experience in just finishing the course.¹³

The Christian life is much like this. the Bible says, “Many who are first will be last; and the last, first” (Mt 19:30). It will take another world to determine who the real winners are. One thing Bob Wieland was not: complacent. He would not take not make excuses. He saw the goal before him, and one arm length at a time, he completed the race in four days. We don’t know how long our race is dear saint, but of anyone in the world, we have no excuse for complacency. Look at the prize we have: knowing Christ. Is there any greater goal?

¹² Lawson, *Philippians*, 171.

¹³ Steven J. Lawson, *In it to Win It: Pursuing Victory in the One Race that Really Counts* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 174.