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Press On; Phil 3:12-16
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Introduction – Paul’s life ambition is to know Christ. We learned that two weeks ago from the previous text, v8 – I count everything (the good, the bad, and all in between) I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Paul says, the goal of my life, the aim of my affections, is Christ – and nothing else – I want to know Him. I do everything that I do in order – v10 that I may know Him.

And we understand he is not referring to some casual acquaintance with Christ. For Paul Christ is far more than a Sunday Savior. And he’s not even referring to knowing Jesus in the minimum sense of conversion. Remember, Paul’s conversion was the Damascus road encounter with the living Lord. It’s after that dramatic new birth experience that Paul writes – my whole life is wrapped up in this one purpose – that I may know Him.

No what Paul means in v10 is that after we come to know the Lord as Savior, and He dwells within us through the Spirit, we have the unbelievable, thrilling possibility and potential for an ever growing personal relationship with the Lord of glory. We can grow to know Him in a very intimate, close relationship such that our union with Him becomes so sweet that we began to hear His heart and understand His thoughts and see His glory – as far as possible on this side of eternity. Now Paul is not making this up. Jesus spoke this way to His followers when He was on this earth. John 15. Read and explain.

Now I don’t know if Paul had the words of John 15 in his mind when he writes Phil 3, but he certainly had the spirit, the meaning, of those words in his mind. Jesus would say to His followers, “I’ve got heaven for you in the life to come. But in the mean time, in this life, right here and now, you can have so much more of Me. Abide in Me. Abide in my love. Let my words abide in you. You can know Me now in wondrous, rapturous fellowship.” Paul says, “If Christ offers that to me now, I want to know Him.”

- I. Why We Press On
 - a. First, Paul says, “I don’t know Him yet to the degree that I want to know Him, and I won’t know Him in this life to the degree that I will know Him in glory.”
 - b. But I’m going to keep pressing on to know Him as far as is possible for me to know Him – I press on to make it my own – I want to know Him for myself like others have known Him.
 - i. Ex 33:11 – the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.
 - c. But wait a minute Paul – you already know Christ as Savior, and you know that means you will one day know Him in the fullness of His glory in heaven – why such effort and why such urgency to pursue this personal communion with Christ now?
 - d. Because Christ Jesus has made me His own – Paul anticipates that very question – why? Some translations say I press on to take hold of that for which Christ has taken hold of me. Because Christ Jesus has made me His own.
 - i. Christ has made me His own – me – I was a persecutor of His people, v6 – I authorized and took part in having His people beaten, imprisoned, and killed. And He took me for His own.
 - ii. The very God who I worked so hard to deny and silence and obliterate from this earth – instead of obliterating me – He pursued me – revealed Himself to me – spoke to me – transformed my entire life – the God who had every right to slay me – saved me.
 - iii. And you want to ask me why? Are you serious? If the God of the universe showered me with such grace, opened my blinded eyes, gave me a new heart, loved me when I hated Him – then what else is there for me to do? I want to know Him!
 - e. Paul’s testimony is our testimony. He loved us when we gave no thought to Him at all. When we were our own god, He pursued us. Not because of anything truly good in us, just purely from His grace. When I was His enemy, when I was convinced I didn’t need Him – He opened my eyes to see, my ears to hear, my heart to believe – the God who needed nothing, was lacking in nothing – brought me to life! I want to know Him.

II. How We Press On

- a. But one thing I do – it really is simple. It's not complicated. It's not reserved for super spiritually elite. You don't have to know a lot or achieve a lot or do many things. To know the Lord in sweet friendship and fellowship in this life – Paul says, “one thing I do”
- b. Now the imagery Paul is using here is of a runner in a race. So there is one thing a runner is doing when he is in a race – he's running – but as he is running he is both leaving territory behind while at the same time coming into new territory. That's what Paul means here.
- c. So as we are pursuing Christ in this life, it is necessary to leave territory behind and run into new territory. Paul says, “forgetting what lies behind” – Let the past go. Forget where you've been and focus on where you're going!
- d. Things we have to leave behind as we press toward Christ.
 - i. The glory days
 - ii. Leave behind everything in our past that was all about me. Remember Paul's 7 spiritual credentials he listed in vv5-6, when Paul's world was all about Paul and how good he was? He says in v7 – whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Forgetting what lies behind. That was the old Paul. That was the old Wil. That was the old life. It revolved around me. Forget that. Let the past go. Because it's not about me anymore!
 1. And if I don't forget me and deny myself, self will subtly and eventually slip back into the center of my world, and rather than running toward Christ, I'll be running in the wrong direction toward me. Forget what lies behind.
 - iii. Forget all the sins in our past. V6 – persecutor of the church – Paul says, “I'm going to forget what lies behind.” My past life of sin does not define my new life in Christ. Our adversary, the Devil, is our accuser. He loves to remind us of our past, beat us down and condemn us with our sin, so that we stop running and stop pursuing Christ. You have to let those sins go because Christ has cleansed you from your sin.
 1. We've all got a multitude of sins that we've committed, but there's usually one that really sticks out. For Paul, it was that he persecuted sons and daughters of God. For

us it may be a hateful act, a horrible addiction, a hurtful word, a lustful pursuit – but it stands tall in our past and tells us – anybody who has done that can never know the Lord. If you are in Christ, that record of sin you carry, Col 2:14 says it has been nailed to the cross.

- iv. Forget the Me in our past, the sins we have committed in our past, and the sins that have been committed against us in our past. Whether it be abuse, abandonment, neglect, rejection, betrayal, or false accusation – the things done to us in our past try to convince us no one could love us – our lives are as meaningless as garbage. But Christ says – Abide in Me, Abide in My love.
- e. Straining forward to what lies ahead. What lies ahead? Christ. Christ in His fullness. Christ in His glory. Christ in His presence. Keep a steady eye on Christ – and run to Him.

III. The Goal of Pressing On

- a. The goal is the finish line. Press on to the goal. Finish the race. Get back in the race. Christianity is more than just the starting line. There is a race to run and a finish line to cross. Listen – many start, or at least they appear to start, and they don't finish. Some don't finish well. I pray, "Lord, I want to finish well. I want to run well. I don't want to fail. I don't want to get sidetracked. I don't want to quit!"
- b. Because when you reach the goal, the finish line, there is a prize, there is a reward for the runners that finish the race – all the runners that finish the race of faith receive a prize.
- c. And the prize is Jesus. You see, you run, you run, you run toward Jesus, and one day you blink, you leave this life and enter life eternal and run right into the arms of Christ!
- d. And He says, "Well done son. You ran well. You finished well." I want to hear those words. I don't want to stand before the Lord and hear Him say, "Why didn't you run to Me? I stood at the door and knocked. Why didn't you let Me in? I was there all the time and you barely looked My way."

Conclusion – let those of us who are mature think this way – let those of us who have some spiritual depth, not chronological age, but spiritual depth – think this

way – and if you have any other questions or struggles along the way, God will give you an answer in His time. Just hold true to what we have. Press on!