

ONE THING : PRESSING ON

INTRO: The Church in Philippi was pestered by those who imagine that they have laid hold on perfection. Rather we are far from spiritual perfection. There are three dangers that the church must avoid: dead orthodoxy, antinomianism, and legalism. We need to make progress in our sanctification. In our text, Paul lays before believers one thing that he will aim for and will exert himself for it.

I. CONFESSING: "I HAVE NOT ATTAINED"

- A. Paul's beautiful confession.
 1. Paul celebrates that he has absolutely no confidence in the flesh or the works of the law.
 2. Rather he rejoices that he is found in Christ Jesus, not having his own righteousness.
 3. His righteousness is that which is of faith, righteousness of God in Christ imputed to us.
 4. Paul rejoices in knowing Christ and the power of his resurrection: our new life.
- B. The meaning of the word "apprehend"
 1. If we say we have apprehended a thief, it means that we have caught him, got hold of, grasped...
 2. Of what has the Apostle Paul consider himself not yet having gotten hold of?
 3. Paul is not calling into question the certainty of his salvation.
 4. But he confesses that while he already has that new life, he does not have it in perfection.
- C. Wonderful confidence:
 1. I am apprehended of Christ Jesus!
 2. God in Christ grabbed hold of me, grasped me!
 3. There is the wonderful certainty of our salvation for all true believers.
 4. I am a child of God, not perfect, far from perfect. I sin every day and fall short of the glory of God.
- D. The race set before us:
 1. The God who justifies me also works my sanctification.
 2. (vs. 12) "I follow after... that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."
 3. The purpose in our salvation is that we live for God's glory. That is the mark for which we aim in our lives.

II. THE RESOLVE: "I PRESS ON"

- A. The picture before Paul's imagination:
 1. The figure of the runner in the race, running for the prize.
 2. This is a very common picture in the Greek/Roman world, and thus common in Paul's writing.
- B. Stressed is the **responsibility** of the believer.
 1. The believer is not idle. But Paul writes "...this one thing I do".
 2. God's sovereignty never roles out responsibility. There are no "rocking chair" Christians.
 3. "I press on.." I exert myself. I run. We must make progress in our life.
 4. We do this because of the mark that is set before us, the prize that awaits us.
 5. Stressed is the persistent concentration: one object in view.
 6. Stressed is the singleness of aim, the singleness of heart and mind, singleness of effort.
- C. What is that mark, that prize, that goal in Paul's efforts
 1. It is the high calling of God (vs. 14). A calling from heaven to heavenly things, the calling out of darkness.
 2. The **goal** is the resurrection from the dead: heavenly freedom from sin, likeness of God, perfection.
 3. The **prize** is the reward given: a crown of life. It makes the mark to be desirable, urges us to press on.
 4. We press on to this mark, this goal, this prize because of God's efficacious call in Christ Jesus.

III. HOW WE DO THIS

- A. "forgetting those things that are behind..."
 1. It is important in foot races not to look back but forward.
 2. Paul does not look back, thinking about what he has been or what he has done, but only presses forward.
 3. Forgetting: this does not refer to our memory, or obliviation of the past. That is impossible
 4. Rather we have here a spiritual forgetfulness. Those things are no longer important to me.
 5. We leave behind the things of sin, the things of the world, our failures and achievements.
 6. Those things will not hinder us, weigh us down, or allure us to turn aside.
- B. "We reach forth unto those things which are before."
 1. Do you see the runner bending down low, reaching forth, urged on forward.
 2. There is intense longing, the eye on the prize in the distance.
 3. Every muscle straining, he exerts himself, reaches forth, extends his hand to clutch the goal.
 4. The goal is perfection. He looks at nothing else, he is detained by nothing else. Nothing must detract!
 5. He runs not in his own strength or determination.
 6. To this he has been called, he has been apprehended. On he must and does by grace go.
 7. till the goal is reached, the prize obtained, the crown of life. "I have run the race...."