

Bible Reading

Philippians 3:12-21

Pressing on Toward the Goal

¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.

¹⁶Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

¹⁷Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. ¹⁸For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

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For many of us the past year may have been a year we'd prefer to forget.

- For some, **death** has invaded their lives.
- Then there is **sickness**.
- There have been **disappointments**: some of them caused by **ourselves**; some caused by **those around** us.

But there were the high points.

- Not a day has passed when somebody hasn't shared with me something beautiful God has been doing in their lives...
- **All** of us here will have the same thing happen this week: another year will be subtracted from our life's span.
- **Time** marches on... no it rushes on.
- And so it's good to **reflect**, to take an inventory of our **resources**, to remember, and to set some goals.

What does he have to forget?

(1) He must forget his handicaps.

- In his second letter to the Corinthians, he lists the handicaps and discouragements that befell him. (See 2 Cor. 11:23-29).
- He also had a physical problem of some sort - a 'thorn in the flesh' - to keep him from becoming too proud (2 Cor. 12:7).
- **Life is a way, a road, not a parking-lot.** Life is a **school**, not a **cemetery**.

- Life is for growth, for movement, for development, for struggle, for **progress**. **So don't park: keep moving**. And don't park by your **handicaps**.
- In every one of us there are untapped **sources** of power, unknown **abilities**, unused energies that are more than sufficient - with God's help - to compensate for any handicap, any deficiency, any hardships, any opposition.

(2) He must move on from his failures.

Phil. 3:6 mentions the biggest of all - his persecution of the church. He's building up what he once set out to destroy!

- **Who has never failed?** Some have 'tried the Christian life and it didn't work' and park by their **spiritual** failure.
- Life's greatest tragedy is **not to fall down**, it's to **stay down**.
- The greatest disaster in life is not to fail, it's to park there, and say 'What's the use?' **'Forgetting those things that are behind,'** says Paul.

(3) He had to move beyond his attainments, his successes.

- His Jewish privileges, (3:5); then his Jewish attainments (3:5-6).
- But when he met Christ, these things proved useless.
- Salvation is something **received**, not **earned**.
- 'Parking' by our past **successes** can be more disastrous than wallowing in our **failures**. The problem is not with success or failure, as such, but with **human pride**.
- Everyone is accountable to God for the gap that exists between our **'actual'** and our **potential**.
- Our task is to grow - and to grow beyond past successes.
- We've got to treat - success and failure - the same.
- You don't have to apologise for your handicaps, your failures, or your successes. **BUT DON'T PARK THERE...!**