



DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Running the Race with Endurance to Finish Well ... By Gareth

READ: PHILIPPIANS 3: 12-16

- **T**he Christian life isn't a 100 yard dash; it's a lifelong marathon. You need the mentality of a long-distance runner. This attitude of viewing Christian growth as a lifelong process is crucial for we all have the human tendency to want quick fixes and easy answers to difficult problems.
- However such views go against the clear teaching of Scripture, which is that the spiritual life is a continual battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are instructed to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7)
- Paul tells Timothy to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ and endure hardship. 2 Tim 2:3. This hardship can often be something that isn't spoken about in Christian circles today. Something that is often rejected however one of the most Godly men in history suffered unbelievable hardship 2 Corinthians 11:23-33.
- Remember spiritual growth is a lifelong process, even Paul admits that he hasn't arrived after 25 -30 years. The important question to ask is "Am I actively involved in the growth process?" Am I studying and obeying the Word of the Lord? Many believers have more time and opportunity now during lockdown than ever before. How are you using your time how am I using my time? Is it being used for the glory of God?
- **THE "NOT-HAVING-ARRIVED" ATTITUDE: CHRISTIAN GROWTH REQUIRES ALWAYS MOVING AHEAD.**
- If anyone could think he had arrived, it would have been Paul. But he always kept in mind that he wasn't there yet. He didn't want to rest on his laurels or to start to take it easy. Remember, this is a man who had numerous visions of the Lord. He had been caught up into heaven and had seen things that no other living person had seen. 2 Corinthians 12 vs1-4 He had written some of the most profound theology ever penned. But his attitude was, "I need to keep moving ahead." You see this even in his final days, when he was in the dungeon in Rome, and when he wrote to Timothy asking him to bring his coat, and then he adds, "and the books, especially the parchments" (2 Tim. 4:13). He was facing execution, but he wanted his books so he could keep growing! Seeking deeper revelation.
- In verse 13, notice that "But one thing!" Paul's single attitude of always moving ahead has three ramifications: Forgetting the past, reaching forward to the future, and pressing on in the present.
- **An attitude of moving ahead from the past: Leave it there!** "Forgetting what lies behind." Again, the picture is of a runner who does not make the mistake of looking over his shoulder. His eyes are fixed on the goal. If he made mistakes earlier in the race, he doesn't kick himself by replaying them in his mind. If he did well, he doesn't boast about it. He leaves the past behind and keeps moving on toward the finish line.
- Many Christians today are being told that to experience healing from their difficult pasts, they need to delve into their pasts and relive the hurtful things that happened to them. This approach has come into the church from the world, not from the Word. It would be wrong to say that verse 13 is all that the Bible says about the past. Even earlier in the chapter, Paul has mentioned his own past life examination, which means evaluating things that have happened in the past, both good and bad, as a means of growing now.

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Week 45

An attitude of moving ahead toward the future: Aim for the goal! “Reaching forward to what lies ahead” (3:13). Paul uses a term describing a runner who stretches and strains every muscle as he runs toward the finish line. “The upward call of God” is His call to salvation which culminates when we stand before Him to give an account and receive rewards for how we’ve run the race.

- Will our work stand the test and receive His “Well done” because we did it out of love for Him and for His glory? Or, will it be burned up and we be saved, but as through fire (1 Cor. 3:14-15)? Everything we do—how we conduct ourselves in our families and in public; how we spend our time and money; how we serve the Lord—should all be done with the mind-set, “I’m going to stand before the Lord and give an account someday; I want to be pleasing unto Him.”
- Many Christians are self seeking, wanting to be entertained by things of this world. Whether it be an indulgence for TV, cinema, sports or whatever. A question I’m beginning to ask myself is this. Is what I’m doing or watching glorifying God is whatever I’m doing approved by God?

An attitude of moving ahead in the present: Keep moving! “I press on toward the goal” (3:13-14). Paul had a holy dissatisfaction with where he was at, so he kept pressing on. Yesterday’s blessings or experiences wouldn’t do for today. He walked daily with the Lord, always wanting more, always learning, always growing, never resting on what has been.

- But Paul recognizes that some will not share his attitude because they are not mature. To those who disagree with him, Paul says, “Stay teachable and God will show you where you need to grow” (see 3:15). He adds verse 16 so that no one will mistake him to mean that you can just kick back and not work at growing. He means that wherever you’re at, you need to keep living in obedience to the light God has shown you and keep seeking Him for more.
- If you want to grow in the Lord, it’s essential that you maintain a teachable heart. A teachable heart is humble, because it admits, “I may be wrong or lacking in understanding; I may need to repent and change.” A teachable heart is submissive, ready to respond to new light God gives from His Word. A person with a teachable heart is not a know-it-all, refusing to learn from other Christians. With that kind of teachable heart, keep moving in the present.
- **To grow as a Christian, you’ve got to give it the proper effort.**
- We need the balance of God’s Word here. Some say, “God is sovereign and we don’t need to do anything.” Others say, “It’s all up to us.” Scripture says, “*God is at work in you, so you work!*” It’s both/and, not either/or. Some say that any effort on your part shows that you’re in the flesh. If that’s so, Paul was fleshly, because it’s clear here that he was pressing on, he was reaching forward to the goal as a runner giving it his all. The Christian life is an active cooperation with the sovereign God.
- Paul’s “one thing” (3:13) implies focused concentration and effort, that he sets aside distractions and works at keeping his mind on the goal of knowing Christ and becoming more like Him. A runner in a race can’t afford to admire the scenery or look at the people on the sidelines.
- The question each of us needs to answer is, “Do I devote myself to knowing Christ and being like Him in the same way an athlete devotes himself to winning his event? And, give it the *proper effort*—focusing on the goal of being like Christ, and doing everything in light of that high calling.