

**Philippians 3:12-16 (New International Version 1984)**  
**Pressing on Toward the Goal**

<sup>12</sup> Not 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.

<sup>13</sup> Brothers, 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,

<sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> All 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.

<sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Good Morning, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ. I greet you in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, Mary's baby boy and the Son of a Living God. Last night as I was standing outside I was struck by the awesomeness of our God. There is a full moon and it is on the east side of my house, some time during the night that full moon will shine into my bedroom window on the west side of the house. While I enjoy the warmth of the sun it is the moon that draws me nearer to God. It is the moon that causes me to search for these song lyrics:

*When I Think about the Lord,  
How He saved me, how He raised me,  
How He filled me, with the Holy Ghost.  
How He healed me, to the uttermost.*

*When I Think about the Lord,  
How He picked me up and turned me around,  
How He placed my feet on solid ground*

*Chorus\**

*It makes me wanna shout,  
Hallelujah,  
Thank you JESUS,  
LORD, your worthy, of all the glory, and all the honor,  
And all the praise... (Repeat\*)*

If you know what I am talking about then I invite you to praise Him. Praise the Lord! Praise Him in His sanctuary! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

This morning we continue with our study of Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. Normally after four weeks of study I would recap for you where we have been, but I will do that next Sunday. Today I want to rush into the teaching moment for there are four things I need for you to hear and receive into your hearts.

This section of Paul's letter could be called "Paul's Instructions for Moving and Maturing". In just five verses Paul outlines what every Christian ought to know and do 24/7/365. These five verses in front of us this morning cover five points that are key to the Christian journey. But I

need you to understand that these points are not steps that lead toward heaven; they are not a map that has a clear beginning and end. Rather they are points along a journey that we may visit only once or that we may have to visit many times along the way. For my note takers just write these five words and leave room to come back to make further notes:

**PERFECTION, PRESS, PAST, PURSUIT, PRIZE**

SHALL WE PRAY! God who named and claimed us, God who knows our spirits and the number of hairs on our head, God who has offered us an opportunity to be with You for all eternity, we your children come this morning to hear a Word from you. We need a Word that will help us to run this race, stay on the path, not look back and not give up. We ask you to send that Word this morning so that we may learn and share. We pray this in the name of Jesus the Christ. AMEN and AMEN.

**PERFECTION, PRESS, PAST, PURSUIT, PRIZE**

<sup>12</sup> Not 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.

I asked a couple once why they had not returned to church and they said they were embarrassed. I asked a teen once when he would return to the church and he said when he got his act together. I asked myself in my late teens and early twenties why I was in and out of church and I told myself I had a few more wild oats to sow. Each of those responses "embarrassed", "get my act together" "sow wild oats" and many others, are our honest admission that we are not perfect. Yet we mistakenly believe that given a bit more time we will be able to get perfect on our own. Scripture teaches us that is just not true – James reminds us that our tongues keep us from being perfect – Jesus says if we wish to be perfect we have to sell all we have and follow him – Paul tells us that he was not perfect but rather **he seeks** to be perfect by following Jesus the Christ. Paul wants us to understand that this is a journey we will not complete until we see Jesus.

Paul tells us in v 12 and again in v 14

<sup>12</sup> Not 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.

<sup>14</sup> **I press on** toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

**Press on** -move or cause to move into a position of contact with something by exerting continuous physical force:

**1** *press the paper down firmly*: push (down), press down, depress, hold down, force, thrust, squeeze, compress.

**2** *his shirt was pressed*: smooth (out), iron, remove creases from.

**3** *we pressed the grapes*: crush, squeeze, squash, mash, pulp, pound, pulverize, macerate.

**4** *she pressed the child to her bosom*: clasp, hold close, hug, cuddle, squeeze, clutch, grasp, embrace.

**5** *she pressed his hand*: squeeze, grip, clutch.

**6** *the crowd pressed around*: cluster, gather, converge, congregate, flock, swarm, throng, crowd.

**7** *the government pressed its claim*: plead, urge, advance insistently, present, submit, put forward.

**8** *they pressed him to agree*: urge, put pressure on, force, push, coerce, dragoon, steamroller, browbeat; informal lean on, put the screws on, twist someone's arm, railroad, bulldoze.

This journey that we are on with Jesus is a journey that does not end until heaven. Some have said and believe that once they have accepted Christ as Lord they are free to go back to their old ways

press – get the old creases out of our lives

Some act like once they begin to tithe they have met their obligation

press – put forth more effort

Some think that have church membership is all that is needed

press – draw close to like believers

Paul declares that even though he had been blinded in order that he might see Jesus; jailed because he served Jesus; with plenty and without he still needed to press.

<sup>13</sup> Brothers, 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,

Paul has some instructions for what we are suppose to do with this past that we are trying to put behind us in order that we might follow Christ. Forget it. No, you cannot always forget the mistakes, the missteps and the misspoken words. But you can stop living in them. Stop letting them define you. Get up and get over it! If God is willing to forgive Paul who persecuted God's church; forgive Peter who denied Him three times; forgive Timothy for doubting the Resurrection of His Son don't you really think God can and will and already has forgiven you.

When we think about our past we tend to think about the bad things we did. But Paul is also reminding us that our past also includes the good things we did. Sometimes the good things in our past keep us from moving forward also. We want to rest on our laurels. We want to take Paul's words and declare that we have fought the good fight and now we can rest. But that is the wrong attitude this journey with the Lord is on going. You don't cross the finish line until you die.

worked when I was young – pray now  
 chaperone kids when I was able – give now  
 volunteered before I had kids – bring them now  
 can't do much (knees, hands, legs) – use the phone now

**PERFECTION, you need Jesus to reach it**  
**PRESS, move forward, iron out the wrinkles**  
**PAST, good or bad it is in the past**

## **PURSUIT**

the action of following or pursuing someone or something:  
 striving toward, quest after/for, search for; aim, goal, objective, dream.

How do you pursue Jesus? In His Word and with His Word

*We must follow God's Word in our own spiritual lives.*  
*We must follow God's Word in leading our families for God's glory.*  
*We must follow God's Word in ministering in the church.*  
*We must follow God's Word in our dealings with those in the community.*

*We need to be **engaged** in the **pursuit** of becoming more and more like Christ, just as Paul was.*

## PRIZE

a thing given as a reward to the winner of a competition or race or in recognition of another outstanding achievement: *the nation's most prestigious prize for contemporary art.*

- a thing, esp. an amount of money or a valuable object, that can be won in a lottery or other game of chance: *the grand prize in the drawing* | [ as modifier ] : *prize money.*
- something of great value that is worth struggling to achieve: *the prize will be victory in the general election.*
- chiefly historical an enemy ship captured during the course of naval warfare.

At the end of the mountain  
there is faith and trust  
I can see Jesus  
Standing there to meet us  
I thank God, I've got to reach it for myself.

Not just to kneel with the angels, Nor to see loved ones who have gone  
Not just to drink at the fountain, Under the great white throne  
Not for the crown He has promised, That I am trying to run this race,  
All I want up in heaven is just to behold His face

**2** In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

There are four things we need to remember as we press on.  
First, when it comes to **perfection** we need to be realistic.  
When it comes to the **past** we need to be forgetful.  
When it comes to the **prize** we need to be focused  
and in the **pursuit** we need to be engaged.