



CAPITOL COMMISSION

TO: *LEGISLATORS / SPOUSES/STAFF*
FROM: *DAN FILE*
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WYOMING

Philippians 3:12-14 THIS ONE THING I DO

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Paul encourages the Philippians to put no confidence in the flesh. If anyone, he could. Paul's heritage was the finest of the fine on paper. If you could earn your way to God, Paul had the list of works and credentials "far more" than anyone else. Yet, he saw all those as loss or rubbish and of no value. All things were loss to Paul compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord. Now, Paul was found in Christ having a righteousness provided through His atoning work on the cross not by his own works. It was on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ that Paul was saved and not on his credentials. Paul gained a relationship with Jesus Christ. But, it doesn't stop there for this is only the start of the race that begins at the moment of salvation.

I. THIS ONE THING I DO: REACHING FOR THE PRIZE- PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14

"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12-14

Paul must have loved athletics. In his writings, he uses these analogies often to teach spiritual truth. Paul compares the Christian to a runner and the race is our walk with the Lord. For example, in 1 Corinthians 9:24, Paul exhorts us to run to win, to finish for an imperishable wreath. The prize or imperishable wreath is becoming Christ like and living in His presence eternally. Here in Philippians 3:12-14, Paul refers to our walk with the Lord using athletic terms such as *pressing on, pursuing, reaching forward* to the prize of our upward call of God.

Paul's goal for the Philippians was expressed earlier in Philippians 1:9-11, *"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ."* The race that is laid out before us is pursuing Christ likeness in order to glorify God until Christ returns. It was Paul's passion and prayer for the Philippians. In Philippians 3:14 he writes, *"I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"*. Let's see what we can learn about running this race of life.

A. SALVATION IS THE START NOT THE FINISH- PHILIPPIANS 3:12A

"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected..." Philippians 3:12a

Once we are saved there is a growing process and a pursuit for the rest of our lives. In salvation, our *position* before God is righteous because of Jesus Christ. And yet, we know that we are not righteous in our *practice*. So the goal for the rest of our life is becoming in *practice* what we are in *position* before God. Our race is becoming like Christ which culminates in the prize of the *"imperishable wreath"* of 1 Corinthians 9:25. The goal is being like Christ, the prize is being Christlike.

Paul states in Philippians 3:9-11 that the gain is in Christ and Christ alone. Paul becomes a believer through faith in Christ and is a new creation. He has a new heart, a new standing with God and is accepted because of the righteousness of Christ covering him. But Paul knows he has not reached perfection or Christ likeness in his walk as he states in Philippians 3:12, *"not that I have already attained, or am already perfected"*. Paul had gained much and yet Paul had a long way to go. The start of the race is not the finish even though it had been probably thirty years since his conversion. Paul had not arrived. II Peter 3:18 says, *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"*. There is a growing process when we are saved. We have received the righteousness of Christ positionally in our lives and have the power of Christ in our life but we are not perfect or without sin. Paul is trying to teach us that perfection in this life is a goal not an achievement. We pursue it but never reach it *"until the day of Christ"*. (Philippians 1:6)

But the pursuit and passion for the rest of Paul's life becomes, *"that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me."* (Philippians 3:12) For what purpose did Jesus Christ *"lay hold"* of Paul's life?

B. LAID HOLD OF BY CHRIST TO PURSUE CHRIST- PHILIPPIANS 3:12B

"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." Philippians 3:12b

"press on," Greek word **"diako,"** means to pursue, to chase, to run after, to press hard with energetic, continuous endeavor.

We are to give our whole lives, pursuing the goal for which Jesus Christ saved us. What goal or purpose was that? What purpose are we to give maximum effort and the use of every muscle to? Romans 8:28-29 says, *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love*

God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For who He foreknew, He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.” God’s purpose for us is that we are conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:22-23 speaks to this as well. The purpose for which Christ saved me becomes the purpose for which I live!! And that purpose is to become like Jesus Christ, conformed to His image and thereby glorifying God with my life. That is what the race is all about; a lifelong pursuit of God that begins at the moment of salvation. This was Paul’s passion and must be ours.

Paul says he is pursuing the very thing that was the reason Christ pursued him in Philippians 3:12b, “that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” Christ pursued Paul so he could be Christ like. That now has become Paul’s goal and the passion of his entire life. It must be ours as well, for that was the very reason Christ pursued us. In other words, Christ’s purpose in pursuing us becomes our pursuit in living.

If we are content with where we are in our spiritual walk, we have reached a **very dangerous point**. What we need to do is be able to admit our spiritual weakness and the need for pursuit of spiritual matters. The whole process starts when we can realize that we are not where we need to be. If we are not pursuing the prize with all our might, we are misjudging our present condition. So Paul is saying that he makes a maximum effort in pursuing the very thing for which Christ pursued him – Christlikeness!

C. FOCUSED ON THIS ONE THING— PHILIPPIANS 3:13

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead...”
Philippians 3:13

Here is the key: Paul writes, “but one thing I do”. In pursuing the prize of Philippians 3:14, it requires focused concentration! The focus of Paul’s life was “one thing”, pursuing the prize, the goal of life. Paul starts again by saying that he has not arrived yet and he had this awareness even now which was probably thirty years after his conversion. He wants to get that point across. He has not arrived at the point where God wants him to be yet. And therefore, he remains focused on the goal by the following principles:

1. “FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND”- PHILIPPIANS 3:13B

We cannot live in past achievements or failures. We carry what we’ve learned from the past with us, but we can’t look back. In a race, if you look back, you are in danger of being passed up or falling. Your focus is on the finish, the prize of becoming like Christ.

2. “REACHING FORWARD”- PHILIPPIANS 3:13C

“reaching forward,” Greek word “*epekteinō*,” is a compound verb of two prepositions to describe stretching every muscle forward to the point of double stretching.

This verb then emphasizes double stretching every muscle to the goal or finish line ahead. *This one thing we do*, we double stretch every muscle toward the goal of becoming like Christ. Now that is maximum effort placed on pursuing Christ throughout our life. Is that the kind of effort we give?

D. A DRIVING COMPULSION TO THE FINISH-

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 3:14

Paul had one driving compulsion to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” We noted that the Greek word for “press” means to run after, to press hard with energetic endeavor and pursue with all our might. It is a present tense verb, which means that Paul is putting continuous effort to pursue the prize.

What is the prize we are pursuing continuously to the finish?? What is this goal that continually motivated Paul to run the race to the finish? Paul writes, “the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”(Philippians 3:14b) The “upward call of God” refers to the time when God finally calls us home and we are ushered into His presence. What is the prize of “the upward call of God”? To finally be made like Christ when God calls me home. Paul constantly pursued hard after this goal for which he was saved. And near the end of his life he was able to write, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”(2 Timothy 4:7-8) At the end of our lives may we be able to say with Paul these same words.

It demand’s all of me, all I have to give. It’s a worthy goal! The prize does not come by intermittent effort but comes with consistency. It requires a lifelong commitment to the finish. Dr. John MacArthur tells a story of many who have died trying to climb in the Alps. One man died and on his grave it said this, “He Died Climbing”. This should be on each of our tombstones as we press on for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus in our lives.