

Pressing on Toward the Goal

Scripture

Philippians 3:7-14 (New American Standard Bible)

⁷But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Devotion

I almost never write anything about a passage that my pastor has preached on because I fear he might think I am correcting him. I would never want to do that as he is a wonderful young man who loves God and has a tender heart for God's people. However, today I feel the need to write on the subject of this week's message. I do so with great confidence because I have nothing negative to say, but feel the need to encourage you by my thoughts.

I am not an old man, but I am not young by any stretch of the imagination. I feel much older than I think except in one area. When I look at the wrinkles and age spots, I am often drawn to think about death. During these times of reflection I do what I guess others do and think about missed opportunities and the disappointments over the years. Oh how I wish I knew back then what I know now.

However, all is not lost. Life has seasoned me, and Christ has set me free from the bondage of sin. Not that I don't sin, but I am not under its control now. When I fail, I fail because I am drawn away by my own lust, which brings me to the point. Like Paul, I know that I have not obtained it or have already become perfect. I realize that I must press on to the goal of being resurrected from the dead. I want to know Him and the power of His resurrection. To do this I must learn the fellowship of His sufferings and be conformed to His death. As Paul says, I must, "count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ."

This will be more difficult for you young people as the offerings of the world still shimmer with promises of happiness. However, you would do well to listen to one with experience. What the world has to offer will never bring you joy. Solomon gave himself everything he could imagine, and he had the resources to acquire whatever he could imagine; and his conclusion was: "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All [is] vanity." (Ec 12:8 NKJV)

However, the upward call of God is not vanity. There have been many days when my morning walk has begun with weeping and confession. However, my God who is great in mercy, longsuffering, and love is always willing to flood my heart with a sense of His forgiveness. He and He alone will be able to comfort you when you go through death's doorway. Do not be a stranger to His ways. Seek Him now while you have time. Press on to the goal!

Don't live for this world. Count all things as loss! As it is written, "Blessed [are] the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed [are] those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed [are] the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed [are] those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed [are] the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed [are] the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed [are] the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great [is] your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Mt 5:3-12 NKJV)

Friends, it is not how you begin the race, but how you finish! Many have begun the journey, but only those who press on in faith finish and receive the prize. Some of you Baptists may cringe at that statement, but I have no fear to write it because I know your heart must acknowledge what I say as truth.

"And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb 6:11-12 NKJV)