**Pressing on the Upward Way**

*Philippians 3:12-14*

**Introduction**

1. Paul gave himself as an example for the Philippians to follow (**Philippians 3:17).**
2. His example was living his life to “press on” to the goal of heaven (**Philippians 3:12-14).**
   1. His mind was set on the prize. It enveloped his entire being. It defined his purpose. IT DICTATED HOW HE LIVED.
   2. “press on” – *diōkō*; to pursue (literally or figuratively); by implication, to persecute. (Strong)
      1. Persecute **(v. 6** – his zeal for God was exhibited in his persecution of Christians because he thought them to be contrary to the Law) – “late Middle English: from Old French ***persecuter***, from Latin ***persecut-***‘followed with hostility’, from the verb ***persequi***, from ***per-***‘through, utterly’ + ***sequi***‘follow, pursue’.
      2. **Acts 8:3; 9:1-2** – Saul’s persecution of the church shows a relentless pursuit of any and all Christians in a negative way.
      3. WHERE HIS ZEAL FOR GOD WAS ONCE WITH A RELENTLESS PURSUING OF CHRISTIANS TO BRING THEM HARM, NOW HIS RELENTLESS PURSUIT IS FOR MATTERS PERTAINING TO CHRIST, AND THUS HEAVEN ITSELF.
         1. **Cf. 1 Timothy 1:12-14** – God saw Paul’s sincere zeal, and strenuous pursuit of what he THOUGHT was right, and chose him to be a force for the gospel. (counted him faithful – trustworthy)
         2. WE SHOULD HAVE, AND CLUTIVATE THE CHARACTER TRAIT OF PAUL CONCERNING HIS CONSUMING ZEAL, AND PURSUIT OF THE THINGS OF GOD, AND THE GOAL OF HEAVEN.
3. Identification of the Goal **(Philippians 3:12, 14)**
4. The Resurrection to Life
   1. **Philippians 3:11** – the reason for counting all loss for Christ was ultimately to reach the resurrection.
   2. What does Paul mean by this? – NOTE: Resurrection is universal – **cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20-22; Acts 24:15** (Paul concerning the Pharisees in his defense before Felix)
      1. **John 5:28-29** – universal resurrection, but a distinction in what the resurrection is “to.” (to – *eis*; to or into (indicating the point reached or entered), of place, time, or (figuratively) purpose (result, etc.) (STRONG)
   3. Paul understood some things, and he allowed it to affect how he approached his life:
      1. He knew his life was temporary – **Hebrews 9:27**
      2. He knew the physical world was temporary – **2 Peter 3:10**
      3. He knew the resurrection to be to a spiritual body – **1 Corinthians 15:42-45**
      4. He knew the resurrection to a spiritual body was for the occupation of a spiritual place – **1 Corinthians 15:50** (heaven); **Mark 9:43-44** (hell)
   4. So, his goal was to live this temporary life by doing “good” in order to be raised to life – **John 5:29** (Doing good? – I.e. God’s will.)
5. Heaven
   1. **Philippians 3:17-21** – because Paul understood his citizenship to be in heaven he did not live to fulfill the fleshly appetite.
      1. Earthly mindset – **vv. 18-19**
      2. Mind set on heaven – **vv. 20-21** (Not living like vv. 18-19).
6. Paul could not “press on” if he wasn’t continually mindful of what he was pressing on to. Pursuit has an object, and we must constantly examine ourselves to see what we are indeed pursuing.
7. Constant Awareness of Incompletion (**Philippians 3:12, 13)**
8. At Home in the Body, Absent from the Lord
   1. Paul didn’t deceive himself into thinking he was finished – that he’d done enough.
   2. **2 Corinthians 5:1-8** – Here, Paul again indicates his goal of the resurrection, and anticipation of it.
      1. **(vv. 6-8)** – knowing the nature of the resurrection, Paul understands that as long as he still inhabits his physical body that he has not yet “made it.”
         1. NOTE: **v. 7** – walk by faith – as long as you cannot see it you know that you do not have it, THUS YOU LIVE FAITHFULLY IN ORDER TO OBTAIN IT. (**cf. Hebrews 11:1)**
         2. Like hope – **Romans 8:24-25**
      2. **Philippians 1:21** – live is Christ – i.e. for Christ’s purposes, for His will. (While in the body Paul knows he is still to be at work for Christ!)
      3. **Cf. Hebrews 4:9-10 –** entering rest is after we have worked.
9. The Danger of Complacency
   1. It is dangerous to think we have done enough. It is dangerous to think we are untouchable. (**cf. Hebrews 12:15** – look carefully; **1 Peter 5:8** – sober and vigilant)
   2. **1 Corinthians 4:8, 14** – The Corinthians were puffed up to the point of viewing themselves as already being in the state that we will find ourselves in heaven. Paul warned them of such a mindset.
   3. This mindset leads to luke-warmness – **Revelation 3:14-19**
10. Constant Forgetfulness and Forward Reach **(Philippians 4:13-14 – the forgetting and reaching forward are that which composes the “press[ing] toward the goal”)**
11. Forget the Things Behind
    1. **Philippians 3:3-6** – Paul had spoken of his Jewish pedigree to demonstrate the folly of the Judaizer’s confidence in their own.
    2. **Philippians 3:11, 12** – All that precedes this verse to verse 7 includes the COUNTING LOSS of vv. 3-6, but also the GAINING OF CHRIST through his faithful living – EVEN THROUGH ALL OF THIS HE HAS NOT ATTAINED.
    3. HE FORGETS HIS PAST SUCCESS/PROGRESS IN THE FAITH:
       1. Forget – not in the literal sense.
       2. Forgetting to the degree of not allowing such knowledge to lead to complacency, thus, a cessation of progress toward the goal.
       3. **Cf. 2 John 8-9** – things we worked for will be lost if we stop working – i.e. if we stop abiding in the doctrine of Christ. (ABIDING ALSO REQUIRES ABOUNDING – **1 Thessalonians 4:1-2**)
       4. THERE ARE TOO MANY UNFINISHED TOWERS DUE TO A SATISFACTION WITH PAST PROGRESS – **Luke 14:28-30** (the building of the tower is a life-long faithfulness and growth in Christ)
12. Reach Forward to the Things Ahead
    1. **Philippians 3:8-9** – goal to GAIN CHRIST to be FOUND IN HIM having RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH.
       1. Not about how far you’ve come.
       2. IT IS ABOUT WHERE YOU WILL BE FOUND AT JUDGMENT.
       3. Found in Him ABOUNDING, GROWING, ADVANCING – **1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Peter 3:14, 17-18**
       4. BE FOUND IN HIM “PRESS[ING] ON”
    2. The things ahead – **Philippians 3:8-11** – knowledge of Christ, and His resurrection power, fellowship of sufferings, ultimately ever conforming to His death. (All that is on the journey to heaven – heaven is the goal, but how to get there is the key – reach forward to those things which lie on the path to heaven.)
    3. Knowledge of Christ – **2 Peter 3:18** – must grow in our knowledge of Christ. (Can’t grow in Him, gaining Him, unless you know who He is.)
    4. Gain Christ – **Romans 13:14** (clothed with Him); **Galatians 2:20** (controlled by Him – He lives in you) (This is gaining Christ – an intimate relationship with Him where you share in life with Him – TRULY KNOWING HIM, NOT JUST OF HIM.)
       1. The Power of Christ’s Resurrection
          1. **Romans 8:11** – dwells in us through the gospel.
          2. Such appropriation of knowledge, thus power, comes through growth of faith in the gospel – **Ephesians 1:17-21** – prayer for the Ephesians growth in enlightenment of the power which works in them. (Ultimately, the force of knowledge in the relationship of peace with God in Christ – raised from death in sin, and alive with Christ who reigns – HE JUSTIFIES.)
          3. **Acts 5:28-32** – Peter and John commanded not to preach Jesus, but knowing that Jesus was raised from the dead and exalted to the position of authority, he was strengthened to obey despite opposition. (CONTRAST TO PETER BEFORE CHRIST’S DEATH AND RES – denying Christ)
          4. Such will allow us to endure suffering for Christ…
       2. The Fellowship of Christ’s Sufferings
          1. Jesus’ call – **Mark 8:34-35** – more than simple suffering – NOTE: “FOR MY SAKE AND THE GOSPEL’S”
          2. The fellowship (SHARING) of Christ’s suffering is the obedience to God’s will NO MATTER WHAT IT MAY BRING – **cf. 2 Timothy 3:12** – persecution?
          3. **Cf. Romans 8:35** – not only persecution, but all the sacrifices that come with submitting to Christ. (IT ISN’T AN EASY PATH.)
             1. BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION POWER NONE CAN TAKE US AWAY FROM LOVING CHRIST – **Romans 8:34, 37**
          4. In other words – WE MUST EVER BE GROWING IN OUR FAITHFULNESS TO CHRIST TO THE EXTENT OF KNOWING WHAT IT IS TO SACRIFICE WELL-BEING FOR GOD’S WILL LIKE CHRIST.
          5. FULL COMMITMENT – **Philippians 1:27-30** – proof of salvation.
       3. The Conformity to Christ’s Death
          1. Not martyrdom – although we are expected to have faith to submit even to such – **cf. Revelation 2:10**
          2. Rather, LOOKS TO THE DEEPER CAUSE OF CHRIST’S DEATH, AND CONFORMITY TO SUCH.
             1. **John 10:17-18** – a voluntary giving of life in obedience to the Father’s command.
             2. **Philippians 2:8** – obedient to the point of death.
             3. **Hebrews 5:7-8** – obedience by that which He suffered.
          3. NOTE: “BEING CONFORMED” – ***“becoming like him in his death” (Philippians 3:10*** – ESV)
             1. **Mark 8:35; Romans 8:36** – losing life to save it; dying daily for the sake of God’s will.

**Conclusion** – Paul never stopped. He pressed on to the goal of heaven. He was constantly reaching forward by consistent and radical obedience to God’s will. We should follow Paul’s example – **Philippians 3:17**