

Why Should We Press ON!

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[0:00] Brothers don't shake hands. Brothers got a hug. Well, turn with me in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4.

Nope, Philippians chapter 3. Sorry, getting ahead of myself here. Philippians chapter 3. And as you turn there, I just bring you greetings from the elders and the saints at Canyon Bible Church of Prescott.

Just grateful for the privilege to get to come and minister to you. I was even getting texts from our elders on the way here this morning saying that I needed to tell you hi, let you know that we're praying for you.

Grateful for the ministry that the Lord is accomplishing here. Grateful for your pastor Jim and his family. And normally, normally if I'm here, it means Jim isn't, which was supposed to be the case this morning.

But as it is, so typically that means his family's not here. We discovered that we actually stole your row this morning and sat in your seat. So I'm sorry about that. But we are grateful to be here with you.

[1:06] And there's grace at the foot of the cross. Yeah, thank you for your kindness to us. It's always such a joy to be back here to see familiar faces, get to catch up with you a little bit.

So thank you for always welcoming us so warmly. You are in Philippians chapter 3. We'll be looking this morning at Philippians 3 verses 12 through 14. And as a college pastor at our church, I'm just preaching through the book of Philippians right now.

So this is just one of the many passages that we've looked at recently, which is why I said turn to Philippians 4, because that's where we are now in college ministry. So it's force of habit. But this morning, for the sake of our time together, we'll be in Philippians chapter 3 verses 12, 13, and 14. So let me just begin by reading that and asking the Lord to help us as we endeavor to understand and to apply his word to our lives. Philippians chapter 3, starting in verse 12. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own.

But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

[2:37] Lord, as we look at this passage this morning, God, we want to ask for your help. We have already in our time together, we have adored you as our great and glorious king.

We have confessed our sin. We're not worthy to be called your children. Lord, we've reminded ourselves and thanked you for the assurance that we have of our salvation because of the finished work of Jesus Christ, your son on the cross, paying the penalty for our sin, rising from the dead to show that he had victory and power over sin and death and offers to us by faith new life.

And because we've put our trust in him, Lord, we have hope not only in this life but an eternal hope that is unperishing, undefiled, will never fade away.

We have a hope in eternity that we long for and look forward to. And so we just cry out to you for your help this morning. In light of all of that, we just want to come to your word and we confess, Lord, we are incapable of changing ourselves.

So let us not be people who come to your word just looking for more things to do, to add to our checklist. Let us be people who come to your word to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ through the pages of Scripture.

[4:10] And as we do, are transformed by you through the truth of your word and the power of your spirit living in us, transformed from one degree of glory to another.

Lord, that is the greatest desire of our hearts, is to know you and to be more like you. So we ask you to help us this morning. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. I'm going to offer you some quotes. The end of the year in December. Quotes from people online closing out the year.

Here's one for you. Horrible year. Good riddance. May this next year bring many amends. Or this one from another online user.

After this awful year, I think I need an adult advent calendar where behind each day there's a different kind of antidepressant. Worst year ever.

[5:09] Next year can only get better. We could probably identify with some of those things. Although I forgot to mention to you that these are actually quotes from December of 2019.

People done with 2019. What a terrible year it was. And looking forward to the wonders that 2020 would bring. Here's another.

Dear 2019, you were horrible. 2020 is going to kick your butt. In whatever way the author of that quote meant it, I'm sure that 2020 did in fact kick the butt of 2019.

But for all joking aside, in many of these, I think this last one really encapsulates the serious emotion that we can identify with that lies behind all of those, right?

And here it is. This person said, At the end of this year of hardship, next year promises new bright horizons for all of us. So certainly for all of the reasons to feel that way at the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020, we can certainly laugh at them, but also identify with them at the end of 2020 and now the beginning of 2021.

[6:25] We can appreciate that. But is that just a worldly thing? To need a fresh start? To seek some kind of new beginning?

To want to put things behind us and look ahead to the things ahead of us? There's a little bit of a spoiler that we already read the verses we're going to be looking at this morning, right?

What then does it look like for us to put 2020 behind us and in many ways other things behind us and look ahead?

This next year, 2021, it's now 1 12th over with already. You have exhausted 1 12th of your year already. But 11 12ths are still to come.

But what kind of motivation will it take for us to do that? What does it look like for us to do that? In Philippians 3, 12 through 14, that's what we're going to talk about. That's what we're going to see from these verses.

[7:26] And you think about the context of this letter because here we're just kind of parachuting into it. You don't have the benefit of sitting on Friday nights with us as we work through the book of Philippians. So let me just summarize a little bit. As the Apostle Paul is writing this letter to the church in Philippi.

This is a church that he had helped plant on his missionary journey and then had numerous, he had visited numerous times, had this ongoing correspondence with the church in Philippi.

Lots of letters probably going back and forth. Certainly lots of messengers going back and forth.

You can even see that just as you read through Philippians, how many times there had been back and forth and that this wasn't the only correspondence from Paul to the Philippians and vice versa. But this letter, this letter that we have in our copy of God's Word, he wrote from prison in Rome in probably A.D. 61 or 62.

This letter was not only written by Paul, but as we know, the Holy Spirit breathed through the Apostle Paul. As he wrote these words to the Philippians, he also communicated the perfect words of this letter as revelation from God.

[8:38] And as Paul writes to the Philippians about their joy and their unity and how it all flows from knowing Christ and walking with Him and standing in awe of the glory of Jesus Christ, we receive some very helpful wisdom from the Lord as we think about putting 2020 behind us and looking forward to the year ahead.

So as we look at these three short verses in Philippians 3, 12 through 14, we're just going to get some practical wisdom from God about how to do just that. We'll look at how and why we can and should press on in 2021.

First, why should we press on? Why? Look at verse 12. Paul says, Not that I've already obtained this or I'm already perfect, but I press on in order to make it my own.

And then you can see down in 13, he says again, Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. A little bit of pronoun confusion here. Just because we're parachuting in, we don't know what he's been talking about.

What is this this or an it? An it. What is he talking about? Well, look back at verse 8. You see the context here. Verse 8. He says, Indeed, I count everything as lost because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

[10:00] There it is. For his sake, I've suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ. There it is. Verse 10. So Paul's been talking about knowing Jesus.

Attaining to the resurrection when we'll perfectly know Jesus. He's been talking about this all-consuming passion to know Jesus better that will ultimately be fulfilled for us at the end of our lives when we do attain to the resurrection.

We know him perfectly as we see him face to face. Now, let's read verse 12 again. Now that we know what he's talking about when he says this and it. He says, Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on in order to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. So the very first reason Paul gives for us to press on is that he hasn't achieved perfection yet.

He doesn't perfectly know Christ yet. Hasn't reached heaven yet. So he says, I press on to make it my own. So we're thinking about reasons to press on because there's more of Jesus to know.

[11:24] That's probably the number one. If we didn't need, if we didn't have any other reasons, we wouldn't need any other reasons. There is more of Jesus to know. Paul has weighed the scale of his life.

He's lived on both sides of the fence. He's put everything he has in life, all of his accomplishments, all of his, everything that he can think of on one side of the scale and knowing Jesus on the other side of the scale.

And he's come to the realization that nothing outweighs knowing Christ. And so he says, I press on because there's more of Jesus to know. There's nothing more valuable than knowing Jesus.

He's phenomenal. He's extraordinary. And you, we were created by him for a relationship with him. There's no greater goal in this life because it's the very thing that we were created for is to know him. So, this is why for so many people who for years struggle with drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality, when they came to Christ, put all those things behind them.

[12:35] Why? Not because those things were too much for them. Because they weren't enough. And when they finally had Jesus, they saw, we saw, I don't need any of that anymore to be happy.

I have all I need in him. This is a lot like the familiar C.S. Lewis quote that I'm sure you've heard a hundred times and you're going to hear for the hundred and first time in three, two, one.

C.S. Lewis says, It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures fooling around with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us.

And like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slum because he can't imagine what is meant by the offer of a vacation at the beach, we are far too easily pleased.

Friends, isn't that true? So often we try to find joy and satisfaction in the things that this world has to offer when the Lord has offered to us infinite joy, the infinite satisfaction of the infinite hunger of our souls in him.

[13:52] If you take every beautiful sunrise you have ever seen, every wondrous Arizona sunset you have ever seen, and you put them on the scale with everything that sings beautiful melodies, every flower, every delight known to man, every pleasure that there is, every natural wonder of the world, and you put them all on one side of the scale, and you put Jesus alone on the other side, it's no contest.

He outweighs them all. Jesus Christ outweighs them all. And that, that is why we press on, because we are constantly seeking him.

We want more of him. Maybe you think, that sounds like some new idea, that a Christian is someone seeking God. Like, wait, I thought a Christian was somebody who found God.

Isn't that right? That's right. So, how is it that having found God, a Christian is seeking God? You just trying to confuse us this morning? Yes.

Not yes, I'm trying to confuse you. Yes, we have found God, and yes, we still seek more of him. We want more of him. We want to draw near to him.

[15:20] We are those who have him, and want to have him more. We are those who have drawn near to him, and want to draw still nearer. This last Thanksgiving, my brothers and I all converged

on the middle of nowhere, between all of our houses on the map, in middle of nowhere, Idaho.

I got a brother that lives in Washington, and a brother who lives in Texas, and you're thinking, wait, we are like in the middle of Washington and Texas. If you could call my brothers and let them know, that'd be really helpful.

However, for the sake of the brothers, we decided to meet halfway between Washington and Prescott, Arizona, and the brother from Houston, poor guy, drove all the way through Prescott to the middle of those two places.

And so, my brother Chris, driving from Texas, did something remarkable. He brought with him his authentic Texas smoker. This, not a grill.

No, no, no, no. This is different. A smoker. And he's like, my brother's like an expert at this stuff. And it was cool, because I never get to do this with him, because he lives in Texas, but he brought in the back of his truck all the way to the middle of nowhere, Idaho, his smoker, which took up like half the back of his truck.

[16 : 47] And he brought all the wood and all of the fire things that he needed. And he's got this digital Bluetooth, like multi-probe thermometer.

I mean, he's like got this thing dialed in to like, it's an art and a science, right? And while we were there then, he bought at the store \$160 prime rib.

It was like this. Huge prime rib. I didn't even know that God made them that big. But it was big. And he puts this thing on the smoker and smokes it like all day long.

And he's constantly like adjusting the air intake on the smoker and watching the temperatures, the external temperature and the internal temperature of the meat. And he's like stoking the fire and adjusting this and that and the smokestack.

There's a lot that goes into this. But at the end of the day, you realize that was really worth it. And so at the end of the day, Chris slices this prime rib for us.

[17 : 48] And we all get this huge piece of prime rib, right? And you take a bite. And if this wasn't the most delicious piece of meat I've ever tasted, then I might be given to hyperbole.

It was so good. But here's the thing. Here's what you don't do when someone puts a piece of meat like that in front of you. It is in front of you, on your plate. You have it and you take a bite. You don't push back from the table and they're like, oh man, that is good.

I'm all set. Thanks. One bite was enough for me. No, you have it there. You've tasted it and seen how good it is. And all you want is, like, leave me alone.

Stop talking. I need more prime rib. Have you tasted this? Stop talking. Shh. Taste the prime rib.

And every, I mean, it's like you can tell how good the food is based on how much conversation there is at the table.

And when there's like none, you know you're eating Chris Drum's prime rib off the smoker. That's how you know. So, knowing the Lord is just like that. Having tasted and seen how good the Lord is, we only want more.

[18 : 57] It's not enough to say, yeah, I've come to know the Lord. Thumbs up. I'm good to go. No, when you've come to know the Lord, you only want to know Him more. Christians are those who have tasted and seen that the Lord is good and it has given us an overwhelming desire, an appetite to spend the rest of our lives getting more of Him.

And this is no new idea either. I would have you look at the Psalms of David. I mean, just start reading through the Psalms. Here's a good example. Psalm 63, verse 1.

Oh God, you are my God. David has the Lord. The very next thing he says, earnestly, I seek you. My soul thirsts for you.

My flesh faints for you as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Which is it, David? Is He your God already? Or are you seeking Him? Yes and yes.

This is what it's like to be a believer. We've tasted and seen that the Lord is good and we just want more. A.W. Tozer wrote a little book called The Pursuit of God. It has a chapter in it called Following Hard After God.

[20 : 09] Tozer wrote in 1948, but it's just as relevant today, if not more so. And after showing in this book how Moses and David and Paul and all the great hymn writers of church history were just thirsting after more of God, he writes this.

Tozer says, how tragic that we in this dark day then have had our seeking done for us by our teachers alone. Everything is made to center upon the initial act of accepting Christ and we're not

expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls.

We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found Him, we need no more to seek Him. And so, brothers and sisters, I would just ask you, as I ask my own heart as I read this text, what is it in 2020 or even in the last month that has distracted you from knowing Jesus better?

What lesser joys are you tempted to set your sights on that distract you, pull you away from the greater, deeper joy of knowing Him?

Christians are people who are running hard after God because we want more of Him. We get our faces into the Bible because I want to know Christ more. We come to a gathering on Sundays, not because we have to, but with expectant hearts.

[21 : 36] There's more of Christ to know. We want to be deeper and richer and fuller in Christ. Maybe some of you younger people are sitting there thinking, well, no, no, no. I did come here because I had to.

Like literally, my mom and dad made me come here. I had to. I would just say to you, if you're one of those younger people, as you continue to grow and get older, you will see that for all that this world has to offer, there's nothing that even closely compares to knowing Jesus Christ.

He is the greatest joy of our hearts and our lives. And as you get older, you will see that one of the best parts of coming together on a Sunday morning, it's not just like going to church, like, okay, check that off of my list.

Got that. I've been going to church every Sunday. It's in the beginning of my Bible here. I got a checklist. And I'm here because mom and dad said so. You are going to get to the point where you can't wait to come back together with God's people because as you do, in the fellowship of the saints, you come to know more of Christ.

And it's a wonderful thing. And the older you get, the more you'll begin to see that. Nothing outside of the walls of the gathering could give you a deeper joy than coming together with God's people and growing in your knowledge and understanding of Christ.

[22 : 58] It's amazing. So we come to the gathering on Sundays for more of Christ. We put our faces in our Bibles every day because we want more of Him. We talk to Him because we want to draw near to Him.

And so I just want to ask you, Christian, is knowing Him the single greatest passion of your life? Because the splendor and the wonder of knowing Him is the greatest reason for us to continue to press on for the days ahead. You will never exhaust the depth of who He is.

You'll never reach the bottom of the ocean of His satisfaction. You'll never scale to the top of all that He has for you in Him. You'll never run out of marvelous things to discover about Him.

The more you know Him, the more you'll want to know Him. The more incredible you see that He is, the more you'll want to see who He is. And so, Christians are people who press on to know Jesus Christ.

[24 : 07] But there's another reason to press on here in verse 12. Take a look at it. Paul says, Not that I've already obtained this or I'm already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because...

Ding, ding, ding, purpose clause. Right? Here's a reason for what He's about to say. Because Christ Jesus has made me His own. So, if you're thinking reasons to press on, number one, well, there's more of Jesus to know.

We don't need any other reasons than that. There's more of Jesus to know. But here is another reason for you. Because He has made you His own. Think about this. In verse 12, Paul says, I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me His own.

You can't miss the play on words here. Right? I press on to make it my own because He has made me His own. And it's meant to highlight something critically significant about the Christian life.

God's sovereignty in my salvation motivates my passionate pursuit of Him in my sanctification. I run hard after Him because He came after me.

[25 : 13] I sacrificed to know Him. I sacrificed to know Him more because He sacrificed so that I could know Him. And this isn't the only place Paul does this with this play on words either.

He uses the same kind of play on words just a chapter earlier than this in the same letter. Look, just maybe even flip over like one page in your Bible to Philippians chapter 2. Look at verses 12 and 13. Philippians 2, 12 and 13. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence.

Here it is. You work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Why? For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

You see the same play on words there? Listen, you're working out your salvation in your life because God is working in you. What we do is because of what He has done.

[26:21] 1 Corinthians 15, 10. Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians something very similar. And same kind of play on words here too. He says, 1 Corinthians 15, 10.

By the grace of God, I am what I am. And His grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them.

Though it was not I, but the grace of God that is within me. So he says, it's by the grace of God I am what I am. So I worked harder than anybody. But it really wasn't me.

It's His grace in me. See, the fact that Jesus Christ has laid hold of us changes us at the core on the inside. And it causes us to want to press on to lay hold of Him.

We have been transformed from the inside out. The fact that Jesus Christ, God Himself, has laid hold of my life, sovereignly rescued me from all of my deepest failures, motivates me to press on in this life because His power now living in me guarantees my ultimate success in spite of all of my failures.

[27:32] I just wonder if you allow that to motivate the way that you live. I wonder if the sovereignty of God in your salvation has gripped you at the core, caused you to live differently, motivated you to pursue Him, to press on.

I wonder if you've thought about this a lot, spent time meditating on the sovereignty of God in your life.

Right on a road trip, you go on a road trip, what's the first thing you do? You stop at the gas station. Because if you're going to go on a road trip, you need a full tank of gas. And it is the gas, the gasoline in the tank that gets you where you're going.

But having a full tank of gas doesn't cause you to want to get in the backseat and take a nap. It causes you to want to sit in the driver's seat, put your hands on the wheel, your foot on the pedal, hit the reset button on the odometer, and put your mind a thousand miles down the road from where you are.

Like, we got a full tank of gas, let's do this. Right? We're going on a road trip. And that full tank of gas just motivates you. All right, here we go. So friends, pour the gasoline of the sovereignty of God into the tank of your life.

[28:58] Let it motivate you to press on in the days ahead. Pour the gasoline of verses like Romans 8.28. So often we, we like, I was going to say crochet.

I don't know what this is. We, and we put it on the wall. Right? We, we needlepoint.

We needlepoint. Oh man, somebody come and tell me what that is later. When we, we, we stitch it and we print it and we put it up on the wall. And we're like Romans 8.28. And we quote it to each other.

But have we really been gripped by the fact that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him?

Has that really gripped us? I mean, think deeply on verses like Isaiah 45.7. Listen to this. Thus says the Lord. I form light and I create darkness.

[29:58] I make well-being and I create calamity. I am the Lord who does all these things. A little gasoline of verses like Ephesians 1.4.

Fuel your confidence in his sovereignty when you read, Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

You know what will motivate you to be holy and blameless before him? The simple realization that he chose you before the foundation of the world. That's a game changer.

That is pouring the gasoline of the sovereignty of God into the tank of your life and letting all that he has done for you change the way you think about all that you seek to do for him.

So Paul says here in verse 12, I press on to make it my own. Why? Because Christ Jesus has made me his own. And of course, we know that he ultimately did that at the cross, right?

[31:00] There was no way that we sinful, broken people could commend ourselves to God. Hey God, how about our relationship? Nothing but wrath from the Father in heaven.

Until our sin is placed on Christ at the cross. And it is done away with. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

And then because of that, he's given us his spirit when we put our faith in Christ alone for our salvation. We turn from our sin. We turn to Christ.

He opens our eyes to the truth of the gospel. We receive the Holy Spirit living in us. And it's like gasoline in the tank. It's on. It's time to go. We're changed from the inside out.

And so Paul says, I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. There's two reasons for you.

[31:58] Two reasons to press on. Number one, because there's more of Jesus to be known. Number two, because he has made you his own. And so thinking about that, thinking about those reasons to press on, then how?

How should we press on? What would this look like for you, for me, to press on? How do we do this? How do we accomplish this task? That sounds wonderful, Jason. We like this.

We love the Bible. How do we press on? Verse 13, Paul says, But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on.

Now, maybe you notice something here. All the kids in the room just noticed this because they've been working on their math lately in school. Kids, Paul says, one thing I do, forgetting and straining forward.

What do you notice about this? Paul forgot how to do math. Because forgetting and, you use that and word, there's something else coming, straining forward.

[33:03] Wait a minute, Paul. That's two things. Come on. Clearly, Paul needs to go back to school here. You reorganize the phrases.

It makes a little bit more sense what he's trying to say. These two things are ways, parts of doing the one thing. He's listened to it this way. If you said, one thing I do, I press on, forgetting and straining forward.

Make a little more sense? Kind of helps you. It's just that the one thing is down there after the ways that you do the thing. So one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on.

So we've seen some reasons to press on. Now we see how to press on. Tactics for pressing on. Methods for pressing on. How to press on.

And I do here is actually supplied by the translators. It's not in the original Greek. Paul literally just says, but one thing. Forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on.

[34:11] So Paul's going to boil the whole Christian life down to one thing. Pressing on to know Jesus more. And you do that in these two ways in this verse.

I'm not going to say these are the two ways. You'll probably pull some other verses, right? But in this verse, here are two ways that we press on. Forgetting and straining forward.

Let's talk about each of those. Let's talk about forgetting what lies behind. We could probably say that 2020 was full of things that we'd like to forget and let them lie behind. But Paul is referring specifically here to things that distract from knowing Jesus, right?

What is it that has distracted you from knowing Jesus that you need to forget and let it lie behind you? For some of you, you need to put behind you your past sins and failures.

There are things that you wish that you could undo. And I know the feeling because that's true for me too.

[35:16] There are things that you wish, things about you, that you wish nobody knew about. Ways that you've hurt people. Ways that you've made yourself look like a fool.

Ways that you've sinned against your God. Ways that you've dishonored yourself and your family. Things that you're ashamed of. Friend, the gospel is called good news for a reason.

When you turn from your sin and you trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, He's not waiting for you to take care of all of those things. He takes care of them. He washes away your guilt because He paid for it Himself at the cross.

It will be no more. If you're burdened by your past sin, you just need to hear these verses from Psalm 103 now. This morning is God's words to you about the sins that lie in your past that still haunt you today.

If you're a follower of God, follower of Jesus Christ, then listen to this. The Lord is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

[36:24] He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

If you are in Christ, brother and sister, your sin has been removed. You can forget what lies behind you because God is choosing to forget it. He actually says that very thing in His Word.

Hebrews 8.12 is actually an Old Testament quotation, but He says it again in the New Testament.

He says, I will be merciful towards their iniquities, and I will remember their sin no more.

Listen, don't let the guilt of your past sin hinder you from knowing Christ better in this year ahead.

The Lord is telling you, He is choosing in Christ to remember your sin no more.

[37 : 32] God is taking it and knocking it off the table that you could have open fellowship with Him. Don't be found under the table rummaging around, trying to bring it back up again. Sometimes we can sit around regretting the past so much that it robs us of today, and it poisons our tomorrow, and it hinders our walk with Christ.

They say, the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, but the second best time is today. You think about that.

Regret for our past sins. Regret is the seed that we plant today, hoping it will grow a fruit tree in the past, but all it does is grow a thorn bush in the path ahead of us.

Friends, you can put your sin behind you if you're in Christ because the Lord is telling you, you can forget what lies behind and press on to what lies ahead.

That is the good news of the gospel. If you're burdened by your past sin, you need to do what Paul says here. Because of the gospel, forget what lies behind you. And if you have a hard time with that, you just go right back to all the gospel verses you can find and start preaching them to yourself.

[38 : 49] Start putting them on three by five cards. Write them in lipstick up on your mirror.

Whatever it takes. Guys, don't write anything in lipstick on your mirror. The ladies knew I was talking to them on that one. But for some of you, it's not your past sins that are hindering you from walking with Christ.

For some of you, it's actually the thing that's keeping you tied to the past is the memory of someone else's sin against you. This too can be forgotten what lies behind and press on to what lies ahead.

You can forgive them and forget what lies behind. And in fact, you need to. It will hinder your walk with Christ. Put behind you other people's past sins and failures against you.

Well, you don't understand what they did to me. Okay, but I didn't write this. The Lord did. And He does understand what they did to you. Well, you don't understand what they're still doing to me.

Okay, but I didn't write this. The Lord did. And He does understand what they're still doing to you.

You can have an attitude of forgiveness, a stance of grace towards them because of what Christ did for you.

[40 : 01] You can put this behind you and press on to what lies ahead with gospel power to forgive them. Right? Ephesians 4.32 says it this way. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

Check this out. The Bible says we need to forgive each other. You know what? One of the things we can learn from that is God expects that people are going to sin against you. Not like they blew it, they made a mistake, it was kind of a bummer, but they sinned against you and it hurt.

And you don't want to forgive them. Actual sins. And He has given you the power to be able to forgive them and to put it behind you.

Apply the gospel to them the way the Lord has applied it to you. Right? You need to forget what lies behind you. Don't let that stand in the future in the way of you pursuing Jesus Christ.

Right? Piper calls this bending out our justification. Right? Undeserved sinners. All we've done is sin against God and broken our relationship with Him.

[41 : 11] And we look up and what comes down to us from heaven? Justification. Undeserved grace. Unmerited favor from God. Forgiveness. He takes all of the ways that we've sinned against Him and He pushes them aside and says, I'm going to forget those.

I'm putting Him behind me. And He pours out grace. He chooses to look at us as though we've never disobeyed Him. And Piper says, we then take that justification.

We bend it out towards others. You have sinned against me. You don't deserve my grace. You don't deserve for me to forgive you. I'm not waiting for you to deserve it because God didn't wait for me to deserve it.

The Lord has freely forgiven me an undeserving sinner and I am choosing to forgive others, undeserving sinners, because God has forgiven me.

When we choose to think repeatedly, the other side of this, if we choose to think repeatedly about what someone else has done towards us, how they've hurt us, and we begin to grow in bitterness towards them for their sin, we aren't getting them back.

[42:22] We're only hurting ourselves today. We're undermining our tomorrow and we're really showing we don't fully understand what God has done for us. See, unforgiveness is the poison that we drink hoping someone else will die.

Christian, you have gospel power to forgive people, to forgive the sins of others against you, get those lead weights out of your pockets, and press on in the race to know Jesus Christ.

Some of you then, you need to not just put behind you your sin and guilt. Some of you need not just to put behind you the sins of others towards you.

Some of you, you actually need to put behind you your spiritual accomplishments. Sometimes, some of the greatest hindrances to us knowing Christ more is just resting on our laurels.

We've done so well spiritually. We just got this great long list of all the things we've done for the Lord. You need to put behind you all of your past accomplishments. That's actually one of the main things that Paul has in mind here when he says this.

[43:32] When he says, forgetting what lies behind, what lies behind for the Apostle Paul in the context is all of his spiritual accomplishments. Look at that in just a few verses earlier in the same chapter.

Starting in verse 4, look at it. He says, Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh.

Like, I got a lot to boast about my spiritual accomplishments. Listen to this. If anyone thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Verse 5, he's going to start listing them. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

But, verse 7, whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

For his sake, I've suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I might gain Christ. Now, rubbish is a word that we don't find ourselves using in everyday language, right?

[44:42] Darling, would you take out the rubbish? Oh, yes, I will. Take out the rubbish. Actually, the word, this is actually a really nice word, the word that Paul uses here, skubalon, is actually the word for poop.

You can't say poop in church. I didn't. The Holy Spirit did. It's right there in the Bible. Now, poop is kind of the kid-ish word for this, right?

Medically, you would say something like feces or excrement. It's uncomfortable even to talk about in church, is it? Skubalon's probably somewhere in the middle between poop and excrement.

It's probably more of like an everyday word for this. But either way, the picture here is clear, isn't it? Whether you call it poop or excrement, here's what you don't do with it.

You don't call your friends into the bathroom when you're finished. Hey, come check this out. You need to see what I just did. We don't do that, right?

[45:41] I mean, like, it's uncomfortable. You're all laughing uncomfortably right now because I'm talking about poop in church. It's just, we don't talk about it, right? We don't even, like, I need to use the restroom. Like, are you going to take a rest?

Right. We don't like talking about this. Paul uses, like, pretty intense word to say, like, you flush it. You get rid of it, right? It's worthless to you.

I don't ever want to see that again. I don't want to think about that again. I don't want you to bring it up in church again. Paul says, when I look at all of my spiritual accomplishments in the past, no matter how big the list is, no matter how much I've done for the Lord, all that I've done, I count it as poop.

I count that. That's just, it's like excrement. I don't have anything to do with that. I forget it. I put it behind me. My standing before God comes down to just one thing, knowing Jesus Christ.

And that's it. And all of that other stuff, all that I've done for the Lord, I don't even want to think about that. My accomplishments are nothing compared to knowing Jesus Christ.

[46:55] For all that I've accomplished, there is still more of Jesus to be known. Some of you have had truly amazing accomplishments spiritually.

For some of you, you've been believers for decades. You've been in the church for decades. You've done so many things for the Lord. You've disciplined people. You've invested people. You've given. There's so much that you could say you've done for the Lord.

But please, don't let that lull you into a state of inactivity in pressing on to know Christ. Some of you have decades of Christian life and ministry under your belt and listen, we need you now more than ever.

When you have the most wisdom to offer, when you have the most experience to draw from, when you have the greatest understanding of God's word that you've ever had in your life, please don't shift into neutral.

Press on. You know when a runner runs the last lap of his race? That's when he's more tired than he has been at every other point in the race.

[48:04] That's when he is most wanting to do something easier than run, like sit. But that's when he sets his eyes on the finish line and gives it his all.

So maybe you need to forget the sins of your past, not let the guilt and the regret weigh you down from following Christ. Maybe you need to forget the sins of others against you. Forgive them, put it behind you, press on to know Christ.

Maybe you need to forget all your past accomplishments and not count on those to recommend you to God and press on to know Christ because there's more of him to be known. But for all of us, we need to forget what lies behind.

Whatever would distract us, whatever would stand in the way of us pressing on to know Christ, let us forget what lies behind and press on to what lies ahead. Don't allow the past to distract you from the joys ahead.

No matter what, there's more of Christ to be known, deeper joy to be had in him, greater truths to understand. So don't look back, look forward, press on. Paul says, one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, straining forward to what lies ahead.

[49:15] And that language there, straining forward, notice the repetition, pressing on, straining forward. forward. I press on toward the goal. This language is athletic in nature, like a runner striving and leaning forwards.

You could even imagine kind of the moment, that last moment he's like leaning forward to hit that finish line first. That would be his chest that breaks through the line. Part of the reason the people in America have such a hard time believing us when we preach the gospel to them is there are countless people who call themselves Christians who don't look like they're straining forward to know Jesus Christ better.

They don't look like they're pressing on. Their lives just don't have this kind of adventurous flavor of a passionate pursuit of Jesus Christ.

And so we preach the gospel and they think about all of those people that they've seen who say they're Christians and they're like, I just don't see it. I think part of the reason for this is we've been so influenced by our culture and we don't, even within the church we don't always see it.

We just finished reading J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* to our kids. And one of my favorite parts of this story is the way that it paints the shire as this place that's so comfortable and so nice to just be there.

[50:41] Tolkien says, in this way, swords in these parts are mostly blunt, axes, they're just used for trees, and shields are used as cradles or dish covers, and dragons are comfortably far off and therefore only legendary.

I just think, America is so much like the shire. We've got so much comfort. We're so unfamiliar with hardship. I mean, think about this.

This is a really good exercise. You want to be blown away by what an incredibly comfortable and wonderful life you live? Take this next week and just pretend you're giving King David or King Solomon a tour of your life for the week.

Right? This is like the richest, like greatest kings history has known, right? Pick any of them from the past. And imagine what they do is you walk out of a room and like flip the light switch and they're like, whoa!

Wait a second. Hang on. Come back. What was that? Or you flush the toilet or you drive through the Starbucks drive or you drive anything, anywhere.

[51:47] Just imagine. We have so much comfort, so much ease, so much blessing, so much security. Even amidst all of the dangers and the problems in this life, we got it really good.

It's a lot like the Shire. And then, we read *The Hobbit* to our kids and we picture ourselves as like, you know, you always put yourself into the boots of somebody in the story, right?

We picture ourselves like I'm Gandalf, the big, wise wizard that can like knock evil beasts down with this. Or we picture ourselves like Thorin Oakenshield who like battled the great orc Azog with just a broken piece of an oak branch as his shield.

Like that's, yeah. I mean, if I was in this story, I'd be like Thorin, maybe Gandalf. I think in reality though, we're a lot more like pre-adventure Bilbo Baggins.

I love the way that the story paints this difference between pre-adventure Bilbo, post-adventure Bilbo. If you imagine when they're leaving the Shire, the very beginning of the, I mean, I was gonna say book, maybe you've only seen the movie, both are true.

[52:58] They're leaving and they're all like, they're all like in their regalia and riding on their ponies and they've got their, their axes and swords and shields and they're off on this great adventure and like five minutes into the thing, Bilbo goes, wait, we gotta go back.

I've forgotten something critical. And everybody's like, whoa, what, what? And he's like, I forgot my handkerchief. And all of them are like, you know, and so Bilbo goes on and throughout the story it mentions him wishing he had his handkerchief or wishing he was back in the Shire again.

At the end of the adventure, having experienced all of the troubles and the dangers of the world, you get to the end of the story and they got this right in the, you gotta get the director's cut, like the extended edition if you're gonna watch the DVDs.

It's really the only way to watch it. But in the director's cut, which is the only true version of the movie because it's so much better than the, never mind. There's this great scene where Bilbo finally gets home.

He's been gone for so long and they started auctioning off his stuff, right? He's been gone for like a year. They thought he was dead, they start selling his stuff. He gets home and he walks in and there on the mantle is his handkerchief.

[54:13] And there's this scene where he just picks it up and he holds it in his hand and it's like this white handkerchief that's got his initials embroidered on it and he's just holding it and there's this moment of thoughtfulness and it's like in that moment you observe and realize how much Bilbo has changed.

He was so comfortable. You know at the beginning of the story he's like, adventures, I don't have any time for adventures, nasty uncomfortable things that make you late for dinner. And then at the end he's holding that handkerchief and you see how far Bilbo has come, the character development as we call it.

I'm afraid we've just become so comfortable. We're more like pre-adventure Bilbo. Walled up in our cozy little hobbit holes, nice furnace, comfortable commodities.

I have no use for adventures. And so, our lives don't have this radical flavor passionately pursuing Jesus Christ or the upward call of God because we're just plain comfortable.

I know that's true for me far more often than I would like to admit. And it's only as we continue to remind ourselves of how great Jesus Christ is that we realize how much we long to know Him better.

[55:31] So Paul then gives us one more reason here to press on. In verse 14 he says, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

So what is it? What's the goal? What's the prize? Well, he's been talking about it since verse 11. It's the resurrection. That's the goal, the prize. The day when we cross the finish line of this great race and our Savior, Jesus Christ, waits for us with open arms to welcome us into heaven where everything has been made perfect including us and where we will know Him perfectly.

We will see Him face to face. So listen, there will come a day when there will be no more tears.

There will come a day that you know Jesus Christ perfectly in heaven.

Today is not that day. We live before that day. We live having not achieved, we've not attained the goal.

like Paul, we're still pressing on. So because of that, because of the way that shapes our understanding of our lives and this world and our future, we can look at all that 2020 brought us and even the worst parts of January of 2021.

[56 : 58] we can look at those and we can see for all of its problems, we can choose gratitude for the good because we know this year was never meant to be perfect.

We haven't arrived at that day yet. And we can look ahead to the weeks and the months and the years ahead of us knowing full well this also isn't that day.

This also isn't heaven and so these days ahead will be fraught with problems but our circumstances in this life are not the thing that define our lives. Our circumstances are not the thing that give us joy.

Our lives are defined and our joy is rooted in this deep passionate pursuit of Jesus Christ so we can forget what lies behind us straining forward to what lies ahead because we know while the future will still be filled with problems there will be a day when we know him perfectly and while we wait for that day this can be weeks, months, and years ahead of us when our joy is full and our heart is satisfied because we are forgetting what lies behind and pressing on to know Jesus Christ more. And so Father that is our greatest prayer this morning as we've learned from this passage in your word and from the example of the Apostle Paul and the Philippians we want to press on to know you more and Father we just confess that too often that's not the case in our lives for a variety of reasons.

[58 : 34] We confess Lord that nothing should hinder us and we want nothing to hinder us and yet too often we allow things to hinder our passionate pursuit of you. So Father we're crying out to you that you would change our hearts.

We're crying out to you that you would allow us to behold your glory and be transformed from one degree of glory to another. Make us more like your Son.

Teach us as we see you and know you in your word. Give us a deep longing to see you and to know you better. And Lord as we do let our lives have that kind of radical flavor where our passionate pursuit of Jesus Christ gives us such a deep joy and satisfaction that it shows in our lives.

The lost people of this world see who we are not because we're so great and so much better than them but because you have made us your own.

We want to press on to draw nearer to you to know you better. Let this be true for the sake of our joy and your glory we pray in Jesus name.

[59 : 52] Amen. Amen. I just want to encourage you at this time. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.