

Communion

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Preacher: Mark Rayfield

[0:00] Paul was in a race, wasn't he? And he had at one stage been running away from God. We see that actually in Philippians. We didn't actually read that part, but he talks about how he persecuted the church, how he was a zealot and he was against God, even though he was a Jew, persecuting the church before Christ, BC.

But now, AD, after deliverance, he's running towards him now. He's running towards Christ. And in this passage, we see that.

And it seems as though Paul is ending the race. He's coming to the end of his life, nearing the finishing line. But however, he hasn't finished. Did you see that in verse 12?

It says, not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect. And again, he says in verse 13, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.

So he's not there yet. And just to help you in the context, apparently, he's writing in jail. He's in prison. And he's attached physically to a guard.

[1:21] I guess with rope, perhaps with chains. And apparently, he's endured this around two years of confinement. Can you imagine that? And it looks as though he's coming to the end of his race, whether that be being martyred.

I think that's what happened to him in the end. So Paul was on this race. He's coming to the end. And the key thing here, he says twice, is press on.

Do you notice that in the passage? In verses 12 and 14, he says, I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

14, I press on towards the goal to win the prize. And this verb signifies to aggressively chase something, to run after it, pursue with all haste, to run swiftly to catch some person or thing. So he's not a passive man, Paul. He's coming to the end of his life, and he's really going for it. He's trying to reach that prize to be with Christ.

[2:33] He's not lackadaisical. And that's really encouraging, isn't it, for us to press on. And it's the prize, isn't it?

He's looking forward to the prize in verse 14. We see that. The goal, the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus, to be with his saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the prize. That's what he's looking forward to. But how? How is he going to do it? Well, he says in verse 13, have a look.

But one thing I do, one thing, he says, forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead. Straining towards, I think that's another meaning of seizing it.

Again, really going for it. And we can be encouraged, can't we, by this passage, brothers and sisters, that when we sin, we can confess it.

[3:38] We can get back up and run the race. When we face disappointments in our lives, we can focus our eyes on Jesus Christ and get back up and join the race.

When we enjoy success, we can thank God and strain towards that prize, what is ahead. And from my booklet, the commentator says this, As with any race, the prize is received at the end of the race, not during it.

When he crosses the finishing line, the line between this life and heaven, this is when we will be given the prize. When Paul receives this upward call, he will not be found shuffling down the track. He'll be sprinting at full speed to the finishing line. So as we come to communion, the Lord's Supper is a gift, isn't it?

A gift of grace to the church, to us. When we partake in communion together, as we're going to do just now, we are visibly saying to each other and to any other people that this is a means of grace for us to keep going in the race, in the Christian faith, to fix our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, to look at the prize and not give up.

[5:02] It really does motivate us, doesn't it, in our lives. It really helps us. What a gift it is. To look back at the cross and see our sin nailed to it.

To marvel once again at the price that was paid for us. And to look forward to the coming of our great Saviour, our great King, when he calls us home and we shall see him face to face. Behold him. Amen. So should we perhaps have a time of thanksgiving praise as we come to the communion table?

So if anybody would like to pray, feel free to pray. You don't have to pray long prayers. You don't have to pray at all. You can pray in your heart. But it would be nice to hear a few voices if we can. And then I'll finish off. If that is not you, then you are welcome here to observe. But please allow the bread and wine or fruit juice to pass you by.

[6:09] In taking this bread... Oh, it's not moving on. Okay, I'll still read it.

In taking this bread and wine, we show our unity together. Thank you. In Christ. Therefore, we ask that you only take the Lord's Supper if you're in good standing with this church or your local church. It is normal for people who are walking in fellowship with Christ and his church to clearly mark their entrance into spiritual life by means of the sign of baptism.

Please talk to any of the elders after this service about any issues that this raises for you. On the night before he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, This is my body given to you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

[7:19] For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. Let's examine ourselves now in quietness in our hearts.

Let's bow our heads and pray. Let's bow our heads and pray.