

I Press Toward The Mark

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[0 : 00] Talking about pressing towards the mark, pressing towards the mark, having that kind of eternal perspective in our lives, which is what we see Paul tells us here in Philippians 3.

! He tells us this, brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. He's saying there that he hasn't arrived yet, if you like. Verse 13 of Philippians 3, he says, brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

Therefore, I press toward the mark for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Paul's telling us here to put things in perspective, if you like, in terms of the eternal perspective.

While we would do well to remember the Lord and not forget his benefits to us, as we touched on this morning, there's things we can be glad for, grateful for, thankful for.

The Lord's mercies, how he's led us. Hitherto have the Lord helped us. But Paul's talking here of the things to let go of, the things that could drag us back.

[1 : 34] He says, certainly, there's some things to forget. Number one, there's some things to forget. It's talking about the past. Forgetting, he says.

Forgetting those things which are behind. There's a rightful step to take in your walk with the Lord to put the past behind you.

We can all have things in our past we'd rather forget. We're called to put away some things, some things that we can put behind us. Paul puts it in Ephesians 4 about some things to let go of.

Ephesians 4, 31 through 32, in part, Paul says, Paul's saying to forget some things, to put some things behind, to leave off some things, to put away some things.

Put away, he says, unforgiveness. Put away bitterness. Don't hold bitterness in your heart. Put away wrath and anger and clamour. Those angry things.

[2 : 59] Put away evil speaking. Put away malice. Let go. It's good for us to let go. Let go of the past. Give it up. Get rid of it.

Some would say you can't change the past. You can't change what's happened to you. It's true in a way. But actually, it's also been said, forgiveness is the power to change the past.

Think of that. Forgiveness is the power to change the past. We can think past mistakes, past injuries, past problems. Unforgiveness, pride.

Put it away. Forget that. Lot's wife looked back. She looked back. And we see what happened to her, don't we? And the word says, remember Lot's wife.

She looked back. And that was a mistake. She hankered after Sodom and the things that she'd left there. But the Bible says to forget those things which are behind.

[4 : 06] We could think of helpful things that it would be good for us to let go of. To give up our wounds and hurts. When others have hurt us in the past, disappointed us, the hurtful things people have said or done.

The Bible says the words of a tail bearer, in other words, a gossip, are as wounds. And they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

And when someone backbites or speaks evil of you, gossips against you, it can be a deep wound, can't it? When someone, you might have that sense someone's talking about you, rubbishing you.

And the words of a tail bearer, someone who's gossiping about you, are as wounds. They go down into the innermost parts of the belly. We can let go of that.

Let go of any pain and scars such as that. It says in Proverbs 18 again, verse 14, it says, The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?

[5 : 12] Now, we can be wounded in our spirit. When we feel a rejection, when there's some resentment, when there's that spirit of rejection, someone's against us, we're feeling wounded, that can take its toll on us.

We can all probably think of such a thing. And I know there's hurting people. And it might be hurts that might be just words or even just that feeling of rejection. Thank God, it says of our Lord, Psalm 147, He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds.

There's healing for the very heart wounds that we can carry, the healing for the very brokenness of our heart. So whatever hurts or wounds you might carry from ill treatment, he can heal them. He can heal them. We can bring them to him, can't we? We can give them to him. He can heal your tears and he can heal the heartbreak, whatever it be of the way that we've been wounded. So for us that believe, if we can be like Paul, to forget those things that are behind, don't waste a day living in the past. Don't waste a day dwelling on the past, those past disappointments and difficulties.

[6 : 29] And even for Paul in the context, he talks about those things that humanly he could have kind of been proud about. His background, as we read earlier, of where he came from, his lineage, being of the tribe of Benjamin, being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, being a proud and zealous Pharisee, he says all of that he counts as loss compared to Christ.

All of that religious learning and training, he says really for him it's as dung. It's the most worthless thing you could think of, isn't it? That I may win Christ, that I may know him, that I may be found in him.

In comparison, all of those things that might have been counted of value, he would rather leave them behind, that he may know Christ, that he might have that spiritual walk with God. And so some, it seems, can waste today living in the past, in those situations of the past. I suppose we might all have times where we might wish we were back in the past. Perhaps in some ways there's some things we might miss from the past, but oftentimes it's sadness and troubles at times, and that can burden us down for the present, and God doesn't want that for us.

[7 : 47] Wholeness is available, thank God. It says, the spirit of the Lord is upon me. Luke 4 verse 18, our Lord says, he had anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

He had sent me to heal the brokenhearted. That's a blessing, isn't it? That Jesus, our Lord, has been sent to heal the brokenhearted. He's been sent to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised.

So if we're feeling bruised, there's a freedom, there's a healing for you in Christ. So we can be grateful and thankful. The Lord forgives our past.

Maybe it's ways we've fouled up. Even as a believer, we might have things we're not proud of in terms of things we might regret, that we don't walk with God as closely as we ought to.

He can heal all the hurt of the sin, of the doubt, of the failings. There's a deliverance. There's a recovering of sight.

[8 : 49] There's a liberty in Christ. There's a release. And we can accept God's forgiveness. That's a wonderful truth. So we can forget, Paul says, forget those things that are behind. Thank God that we can determine to follow him, to forget those things.

And in a way, also, thank God that he forgets. He forgets even for us. He forgets our sin. As we read in Jeremiah 31, in part it says, verse 34, I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Thank God, God can so forgive that he forgets. That's absolute forgiveness, isn't it? As someone has commented, forgiveness means God buries our sins, and he does not mark the grave.

Our loving Father would much rather forgive than judge. When he sees a Christian, he sees a person totally covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That's what he sees when he looks at you.

He doesn't think of all those sins. They're all forgiven. They're all blotted out. It's deleted. It's gone forever. They're gone, forever gone.

[9 : 57] Forgiven. That's how completely we are forgiven. That's how he forgives us, that he remembers our sin no more. So it's good for us to have that forgetfulness of the things of the past.

There's things to forget, Paul says. And secondly, Paul says, there's things to reach for. Things to reach for. Press forward. Let go of the past and seize the future.

And Paul's painting this picture of this running of a race, and he's saying there's some things to reach forth to that lie ahead. There's some things to stretch towards, to stretch forward, to reach into your future.

We see the writer to the Hebrews say, likewise, that we should leave those doctrines, the principles of the doctrines of Christ, those kind of essential foundational doctrines, and he says, let us go on. Let us go on unto perfection. In other words, to maturity, to get more mature, to get stronger in our faith, to get more Christ-like, to get more like him, to go on, he says, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God.

[11 : 08] He says, keep on growing, keep on going, going on, going on. And that's God's perfect will, really, isn't it? That we would realise that spiritual growth that he wants for us, to grow in our faith.

And there's hope for the future. There's more faith ventures ahead, that lie ahead for us. There's unexplored territory for you that know the Lord. And the word of God gives us great comfort in that progress of our Christian walk that he wants for us.

As we read before, Ephesians 4, as we let go of those things of anger, of malice, and rather replace them with things to go on to, to go forward to.

He says, be kind one to another. He says, be tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you. So here's some things to reach forth to, to reach forward to. Kindness, tender-heartedness, forgiveness. Here's how to amend that broken heart, to overcome that bitterness and guilt, to replace poison with sweetness, to know that truth and that new way of life that he wants for us.

[12 : 16] It's alike to how he tells Timothy, 1 Timothy 6, verse 11. He says, again, the context was letting go of those things of sin. And he says, but thou, O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

He says, flee these things, follow after these things. The sense of the follow after is pursue them. It's like something to, to really race towards these things, of righteousness, of godliness, of faith, of patience, of that steadiness, of steadfastness, that meekness, that holiness.

So there's things to forget and there's things to reach forth to, to things to reach forth. And thirdly, to be conscious of the prize ahead. Thirdly, there's a mark to press toward.

Paul says of this mark, of the prize, of the high calling. Paul tells of this concentration, of his resolve, of his determination.

He says one thing, one thing, will I do. One thing, this one thing, I do. And really, brothers and sisters here tonight, one thing, that ought to, steal us, and, and, that should move us, and, inspire us, is really God's will.

[13 : 41] What is God's will? What does God want for me? That single mindedness, that, of devotion to Christ, this one thing, this one thing. he tells of that concentration, and he tells of a crown, of a, an incorruptible crown, as we read in 2 Timothy 4.

It's really the end of the Christian life, isn't it? Friends, we're all getting closer to the finishing line. Amen? We're closer today, than we were yesterday. And it's kind of a, a daunting thought, in a way, isn't it?

That really, our running of this race, is time, limited. And we see, there's a crown. And this crown, a head, it's an incorruptible crown.

It's something, that we can, look forward to, that he will crown us. There'll be a crown, for your head, that know him. And, it's not by your works, but it's by his grace.

You have such a crown. But, a head lies for us, that mark, to press toward. That prize, that crown, that reward. We read here, in 2 Timothy 4, verse 7 through 8, I have fought, a good fight.

[14 : 51] I have finished, my course. That running track. I have kept, the faith. Henceforth, it says, henceforth, that just around the corner, he says, there is laid up for me, a crown, of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me, at that day.

And not to me, only, but, unto all, them also, that love, his appearing. Now, if we love the, saviour, we're longing for his appearing, then this crown is for you, that look forward to that day, that look forward to that, one who will appear, the blessed saviour.

And James 1, 12, it says, blessed is the man, that endureth temptation, for when he has tried, he shall receive, he shall receive, the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them, that love him.

If you love the saviour, the Lord has promised to you, the crown of life. And when you are tried, you can be blessed, you can say, I'm blessed, because, we shall receive, the crown of life.

So friends, there's that mark, that, that goal, that, that finishing line, looking unto Jesus, that mark, that is set before us, that, that upon which, our eyes should be fixed, that aim of our life, that goal, that prize, this one thing, I do.

[16:14] Someone has talked about, some like, examples of this one thing, this one thing, this one thing, I do. And, we could think, in terms of, even in the secular, settings of life, when someone really, puts their, focus on one thing, they, aspire to, there's, there's a result there, from that focus.

There's, there's something that comes from, having that, purpose. A single minded focus, even the world can see, that, that is, going to, benefit, to have that one thing, that single mindedness.

For example, a great artist, must say, one thing I do. They work at their, learning, their, their drawings of, of art. This one thing, I do.

And they will excel. A gifted teacher, says this one thing, I do. As they would work, at their studies, and be more, able, as a teacher. The champion athlete, would say this one thing, I do.

You see how they, work day and night, in training, all to that end, of that one thing, that gold medal, they're aiming to. The, the single parent, raising a child, must say, one thing I do.

[17:28] It leans upon them, heavily, that they must put, their energy, into that, child raising. That, that one, who would be a student, who wants to excel, they say, this one thing, I do.

But how much more important, how much more essential, that we that trust our Lord, will have the same heart, as the apostle Paul, who said, one thing I do, one thing I do. To have that heart, that that, that's really, really the ultimate, isn't it?

And that, prize, that, that mark, that lies ahead, Paul says, this one thing, I do. And, we can look forward, to that day, when our Lord, will say, well done, our good and faithful servant, answer thou, into the joy, of thy Lord.

Most of us, would rather say, many things, I do. I mean, I suppose, I can be a bit like that, you get, you spread so thin, that you're not always effective.

You have so much, so many little, things you're covering, that you always, don't always make the, the impact. And we can all, have that, make that error, can't we?

[18:37] Really, we can be so, so spread, that we're not, doing one thing, the one thing, that really, matters. Paul says, I press toward the mark, he says, there's a higher calling, he says, there's a high calling, a heavenly calling, a holy calling, there's a holy life.

And, this one thing I do, it speaks about priority. We could think of some other scriptures, that have the same kind of theme. For example, Psalm 27, verse 4, the psalmist said, one thing, one thing, have I desired, of the Lord, that I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold, the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire, in his temple.

Worship, is the one thing, you can, you can, want that for yourself, to want that as a believer, to want to worship him, to want to give him honour, to give him worship.

We see, our Lord says, of one, that had, I suppose, other loves, and had, a devotion to, worldly wealth, love, and, the Lord challenged this one, in Mark 10, 21, one thing, one thing thou lackest, go thy way, sell, whatever thou hast, and give to the poor, thou shalt have treasure in heaven, come, take up the cross, and follow me.

There's a challenge for this one, he had, other priorities, he said, one thing, you lack, follow me, follow me. Another example is, of course, that familiar one, Mary and Martha, and we see, the Lord Jesus said to Martha, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled, you're full of care, you're troubled, you're stressed out here, worry about all these things, but one thing is needful, one thing is needful, and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her.

[20:34] What was the one thing Mary did? She sat at his feet, and heard his words, she communed with the Saviour, and we see another thing, another one thing, is of that blind man, who testified, one thing I know, one thing I know, I used to be blind, and now I can see, you know, tell what the Lord has done for you, that's another one thing to do, isn't it?

And then of course, back to where Paul is saying, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, this one thing I do, forgetting those things, which are behind, reaching forth unto those things, which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus, don't look backward, look forward, be like Paul, as you run that race, because, Paul's running that race, or has run, he's finished that course now, we're still on the race track, aren't we? We're still on that race track, we've not finished our course yet, we're still the running team, we're still running our race, each one of us, and there's still that mark, the prize of the high calling of God,

in Christ Jesus, it's really, I guess it's, wanting God's best for your life, isn't it?

Wanting God's will for your life, wanting to do God's purpose for your life, this one thing, this one thing I do, and another one thing is, as Peter writes, 2 Peter 3, he says, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, the day of the Lord is coming, the day of the Lord, be ready for Christ's return, he says, don't be ignorant of this one thing, don't miss this one thing, Christ is coming, be ready for Christ's return, so we could think of these, many commendable one things, anyway, it's many things, but they're all the same, aren't they?

It's thinking, to please God, to be in, that mind, that heart, that purpose of your life, that you would be, as the one who wanted to worship, to worship the Lord, this one thing, I want to do, I want to worship God, this one thing, that you would follow him, that you'd take up your cross, this one thing, that you'd sit at his feet, that you'd hear his word, this one thing, that you can testify, I was blind, now I can see, one thing you want to tell the world, and this one thing, that Christ is coming, and you want to be ready, you want to be preparing, friends, one thing I do, this one thing I do, determine, resolve, purpose in your heart, write it down, and commit, to this one thing, that you would want, to find and follow, the will of God, for your life, there's a man, who was slowly, losing his memory, and he went to the doctor, and the doctor said, well, there is an operation, that I can do, on your brain, and this is going to reverse, the condition, and, it, it might reverse, the condition, it might restore, your memory, however, when I, undertake this surgery, it is so delicate, that a nerve, might be severed, causing, total, blindness, what would you rather have, your sight, or your memory, the man thought for a while, and he pondered that, and he said,

[23 : 56] I'd rather have my sight, because I'd rather see, where I am going, than remember, where I have been, it's true, isn't it, forgetting those things, that are behind, memories, are often pleasant memories, but rather to see, to see, to see what lies ahead, to press toward the mark, we want to have sight, we want to have our, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher, of our faith, rather to have sight, do you know, where you're going, very important question, isn't it, set your affection, on things above, things above, things above, not on things, on the earth, things above, this is a high calling, a holy calling, an upward calling, things above, press upward, press forward, press onward, press heavenward, press toward the mark, the mark, to Christ, the purpose of your life, is to live for Christ, that is the purpose, of every life, ordinally, to live for Christ, to live for Christ, for his kingdom, that is our destiny, to live the Christian life, is the one thing, that we ought to want to do, to live for him, to live to please him, our aim, our mark, our goal, our purpose, our target, is that Christ, centered life, this one thing, this one thing,

I do, by faith, I will do, I will commit, I will dedicate, I will have that passion, for my Lord, there's a prize, there's a reward, there's a high calling, press toward the mark, brother, press toward the mark, sister, don't worry about the spectators, but aim for the mark, don't worry about, how many, are running with you, and how many, are against you, press toward the mark, towards the mark, this one thing, I do, and this goal for us, is Christ likeness, to run in such a way, that you obtain, have that pursuit, of it, that you cannot be turned aside, run that race, with patience, brethren, I count not myself, to have apprehended, but, this one thing, I do, forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forth, unto those things, which are, before, I press toward the mark, for the prize, of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus, you know, friends tonight, of course I'm preaching, really to believers here, you're not even on the running track, unless you've trusted Christ, you haven't left the, those stops, that the athletes, are situated on, maybe you're not even there, but friends, to, run the Christian race, you have to be saved, you have to know the saviour, and that's simply, by trusting Christ, to, know him, as Paul said, to know him, is more than any of the, claims of, righteousness, that he could, offer, he says,

I count all things, but loss, for the excellency, of the knowledge, of Christ Jesus, my Lord, Christ Jesus, my Lord, so, if you know Christ Jesus, as, you can say, my Lord, then you're on that running race, you're running on that, on that track, you might feel, maybe you're faltering, you're flagging, you're getting sidetracked, maybe you're, you're wandering, maybe you need to get, your running shoes back on, and get back in the, in the zone, as it were, God will help you, to run that race, but, have that, single-mindedness, this one thing I do, God will help you, to run your race, and run it well, to run with patience, we know Paul talks about some, who are running, and he says, who's hindered you, some people were running, and they got hindered, they got, led away, from the running track, he says, who had hindered you, you were running so well, let's be mindful of that, that we would, have that one thing I do, this one thing I do, it's important, let's pray,

Lord we pray, help us to have, an eternal perspective, even in these days, we live where it's easy, to have so many things, we want to have, this one thing, to please you, this one thing, to do your will, to know your purpose, for our life, to know and see, and run to that mark, that prize, that heavenly calling, that wonderful, goal, of the Christ centred life, to know your will, and to find, and do it, Lord help us, when we might feel, a little flagging, on this race, help us to look, unto Jesus, our Lord, looking unto you, the author, the finisher, of our faith, give us heart, Lord give us resolve, that with determination, with purpose, we'll find, and follow, your will, and give us grace, Lord, to forget, those things, which are behind, whether it be, disappointments, or hurts, or situations, that would, would draw us back, to, to worry about, what has happened, help us Lord, to forget those things, which are behind, and to look forward, to look ahead, and with faith, because, our future, is in your hands,

Lord, our future, is by faith, it's, it's laid out for us, that track, that you want us to run, help us to do that, we pray, encourage each heart, Lord, that each one, might have that, resolve, to purpose, this one thing I do, we praise you Lord, give us, the strength, to run that race, with patience, looking unto you, Lord Jesus, the author, and the finisher, of our faith, in your precious, name we ask, Amen.