Press on Toward the Goal

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Preacher: Lindon Nairn

[0:00] Good morning, church. Our scripture lesson this morning is taken from Philippians chapter 3, verses 1 through 21.! Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.

! To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs. Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh.
For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God. And glory in Christ Jesus. And put on confidence in his flesh. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also.
If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. 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.
[1:02] As to righteousness under the law. Blameless. But 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 have suffered the loss of all things. And counted them as rubbish.
In order that I may gain Christ. And be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own. That comes from the law.
But that which comes through faith in Christ. The righteousness from God. That depends on faith.
That I may know him and the power of his resurrection.
And may share his sufferings. Becoming like him in his death. That by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.
[1:57] Not that I have already obtained this. Or am already perfect. But I press 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. But one thing I do. Forgetting what lies behind. And straining forward to what lies ahead.
I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way.
And if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.
Brothers, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.
[3:00] For many of whom it have often told you and now tell you even with tears. Walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their ends is destruction. Their God is their belly. And they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things.
But our citizenship is in heaven. And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.
By the power that enables him to subject all things to him. Amen. Amen. Good morning.
Thank you, Michelle. Let's pray. Father, what beautiful words. Father, what beautiful words. Father, what beautiful words.
[4:01] We have heard read to us. What promise lies before us. That these mortal bodies.

Will one day be transformed our lowly bodies. To be like the glorious body of your son Jesus Christ.
Father, our prayer today. As we preach your word. Is that you would cause it to be clear.
That you would cause Jesus Christ. To be seen. Lord, that you would open the eyes. Of those whose eyes are closed to the truth of the gospel.

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Lord, that you would transform hearts. Lord, that you would encourage. Believers who are discouraged. You would uplift.
[5:12] All of us, Lord. As we traverse. This side of Jordan. In the name of Jesus, we pray.

Amen. While we have read. The. Entirety of Philippians 3.
Our focus. This morning will be. On three verses. Verses 12 to 14. This is what it says.
Not that I have already obtained. This. Or I. Already perfect. But I press on.
To make it my own. Because Christ. Jesus. Had made me. His own. Brothers. I do not consider.
[6:16] That I have made it my own. But one thing I do. Forgetting what lies behind. And shrinking forward.

To what lies ahead. I press on. Toward the goal. For the prize. Of the upward call. Of God.
In Christ. Jesus. I think. The sense. That Paul. Seeks to convey. In these.
Verses. Is that believers. Is that believers. Mindful of the prize. That awaits them.
Must finish the race. I think it's that simple. Mindful of the prize. That awaits us. As believers.
[7:12] As believers. We must finish. The race. I've organized. The sermon.

Under four distinct. Points. The goal. The motivation. The method. And finally.
The prize. Paul writes. This. Letter. To a church. That he founded.
And loved. Paul had great affection. For them. As he. Says repeatedly.
And they had. Great affection. For him. It's interesting. That Paul. Writes. This. Letter. From.
[8:14] A prison cell. In Rome. The. Members. Of the church.

Had witnessed. Paul's. Torture. At the hand. Of Jews. And now. Imprisonment. By Gentiles.
It is. Against. Against. That. Bad. Drop. Having. Regard. For. Paul's. Torture. At the hands.
Of Jews. And having. Seeing. Paul's. Imprisonment. By Gentiles.
Against. That. Bad. Back. That. Paul. Writes. To this. Church. Press. On. Toward. The goal. Don't give up.
[9:11] In other words. Paul says. Come what may. Don't. Give up. Perhaps.

Some were. Expecting news. Having heard that this. Letter was coming. Maybe. Perhaps. Some of them. Were expecting news.
That Paul had. Grown. Wary. Of doing. The Lord's work. This letter was. Not of that nature. It was.
An encouragement. To press on. Paul uses. Very. Stark. Very. Clear.
Analogy. As he writes. To this church. As he writes. To them. He talks. To them. About a race.
[10:07] And he says. Life. Life. The Christian life. Is. Like. A race. Like a long.

Sometimes. Difficult. And sometimes. Discouraging. Race. Picture. Picture the runner. On the track.
Sweating. Stumbling. But still. Pressing. Forward. And in the stands. Are supporters.
Shouting. Don't give up. Press on. The finish line. Is. Ahead. That's the message.
That. That's what Paul. Is saying. To this church. And by extension. To us. In these. Few words. In Philippians. Chapter 3.
[11:03] Encouraging us. Not to quit. The race. Of faith. But to continue. Why does Paul. Write. To this. Minority.

Church. In this way. Does so. Because. He knows. There are distractions. Paul understands.
That. In life. In the life. Of every believer. In the life. Of every individual. There. Are. Bound.
To be. Distractions. Paul knows. How hard it is. To exist.
In a world. Where. You stand out. So he says. Continue. Paul understands.
[11:57] That. These words. To run. And not to give up. These words. Are challenging. But they are also.

Pragmatic. Challenging. Because. Oftentimes. They are hard. Pragmatic. Because.
They require you. To. To do something. To. To make an effort. Paul understands. That these words. They demand. Personal.
Introspection. Yet. They acknowledge. The work. That only the Lord. Can do. Yes. You must. Do your part.
But ultimately. There is work. That only the Lord. Can do. These. Words. That Paul writes.
[12:57] Brothers and sisters. To the church. And to us. They are for. Young believers. But can I tell you.

I believe. These words. Are especially. Appropriate. For the not so young. Believers. They are especially.

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Appropriate. For those. Who have. Been. On this journey. For quite a while. They are for the discouraged. And.
For the encouraged. Paul uses. The analogy. Of a foot race. To challenge those.
In the race. To finish. The race. Mindful of the prize. That awaits them. Paul warns members.
[14:01] Of the church. To grow in their knowledge. Of Christ. And to grow in holiness. He wants us to.

Regard those pursuits. As an athlete. Would. A race. And only for the believer. Only for the believer.
The race. Is. A lifetime. It never ends. Let's now consider. Our first point. The goal.
Every race. Brothers and sisters. Has a goal. And the race. That Paul references here. Has a goal.
In verse 12a.
Paul. Refers. To the goal. Of the race. Listen to what he says. Not that I have.
[15:04] Already obtained. This. Or I am. Already perfect. Perfect. But I press on.

To make it my own. I press on. To make it my own. Paul says. I have.
It's not that I have. Already. Obtained this. It's not that I have. Already obtained. This goal. It's not that I am. Perfect. But I press on.
To make it my own. The goal. Might be summed up. This way. Simply. Believers. Are to grow in holiness. It's really.
That simple. That's what Paul. Is talking about. If you read. The verses. Proceeding. It's clear. That is what Paul. Is talking about. But how do we.
[16:00] Get this goal. From these. Few words. That. That are found. In 12a. Let's take. A closer. Look at it. Paul says.

Listen. Whatever this goal is. He said. I haven't attained it. You see that. He said. I haven't. Arrived yet. And then the next thing he says.
It requires. Perfection. Which. He. Does. Not. Have. So how do we.
Using those two. Truths. How. Might we deduce. What. The goal is. Clearly. Paul is not here. Talking about salvation.
Because we know. That Paul. Was. A believer. More.
[17:05] More. More. Paul makes clear. In the preceding verses. Salvation is the Lord's doing.

The next thing we see here. In. This. These. Few. Words. Is. That the apostle Paul. Humbly declares.
To these individuals. Whom he loves. And whom. He has led. And who look to him. For leadership. Paul says to them. Look. Look at me. I am.
Imperfect. Not in a. Ministry. Disqualifying way. He is just. Not perfect.
Not perfect. He doesn't know Christ. Perfectly. He doesn't live. Perfectly. Paul says.
[18:07] I. Not that I have. Already obtained this. Or I'm already. Perfect. But I press on. He says.

I'm not perfect. Perfect. You and I. Are not perfect. But Paul. Says.
I want to be. Like Christ. He wants to know him. Increasingly. Paul says.
I want to pursue holiness. I want to pursue holiness. Each and every day. I have my life. I want my life to be marked by this pursuit.
Being set apart. Separation from sin. And dedication to God. Paul says. I want to pursue holiness. I want to pursue holiness.
[19:08] Paul says. In this run. That he calls us to. We are not to settle for partial growth.

We are not to settle where we are. We are to continue to grow. God's goal. God's goal for you. And for me. Is transformation.
Not to remain stagnated. And yes. It is true. That we never achieve. Perfection. But we never give up trying.
But what keeps us running. This race. This Christian race. Brothers and sisters. When we stumble. When we grow tired.
Or when we lose sight. Of the finish line. What keeps us running? That leads me to my second point. The motivation.
[20:16] And here we find in. Verse 12b. But let's read the entire. Verse 12. Not that I have already obtained.

This. I am already perfect. But I press on. To make it my own. Why? Because Christ Jesus. Has made me.

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His own. Paul writes. That he seeks to be. Holy. His motivation is.
Driven by the fact. Christ Jesus. That Christ Jesus. Has made him. His own. It is because of Christ. Gracious. Gracious. Grip. On him.
The believer is not motivated. To be holy by. Pride or. Personal success. it's something quite fundamental.
[21:19] I press on because Christ Jesus has made me, has made me his own. Paul makes clear that his entrance, brothers and sisters, into the race was not his own doing.

Paul didn't enter this race because he chose to enter this race. There is nowhere in these writings does Paul suggest that.
In fact, if you look further up in verses 8 and 9, Paul writes very plainly about this fact, that it was Christ Jesus, it was his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that caused him to be in this race.
Brothers and sisters, my point is that you and I are, as believers, are in the race. We are in the race. That's not the question.
The question is, what are we doing while we are in the race? Are we going to press on? Are we going to run this race?
[22:43] How are we going to run the race? The believer runs the race because Christ has placed him or her on the track.

Christ selects the believer for the race and ensure that he finishes the race. But what motivates us to press on then?
We don't press on to earn salvation. We press on because we have salvation. We are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone.
Notice that Paul does not say, get into the race, because we are in the race. Brothers and sisters, since Christ's love is our motivation, how then do we run effectively?
If you're an athlete or if you're engaged in any kind of sport, you know you got to have a strategy. And so my next point deals with this whole question of the strategy or the method.
[24:07] Point number three. Paul gives us, in verse 13, a two-pronged strategy for the race.

Listen to what he writes. brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own.
He repeats himself here. I don't consider that I've made it my own. But one thing I do. Here's the strategy. forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.
That's what he says. Paul says, my strategy is to forget what lies behind me and to strain towards what is before me.
Paul writes to us believers, brothers and sisters, Paul says to us that in this race that you and I are on, that you and I, we need to forget what lies behind us.
[25:24] He says to us, in this race, don't look back. He says, don't look back. Don't look back at the bad things. And don't even look back at the good things.

If you are in a race, a competitive race, you don't have time to look back because when you start looking back, you know the person on the side of you is going to beat you.
Looking back can cause you to stumble. The runner who keeps glancing behind loses focus and slows down.
Paul writes about our human tendency. You see, we have a tendency often to look back at failures, at mistakes, whether it's things that come into our own minds or things that people remind us about, but tell them when these things come up, say, listen, I'm on a journey.
Press towards the goal and I don't have time to look back. I'm going to forget what's behind me.
[26:58] Whatever it is that is behind you. Not even the good. You don't win the race because of the good things that you've done in the past.

Paul says, forget it all. Don't rest on your accomplishments. Don't rest on your laurels. Paul says, they don't cause you, us, brothers and sisters, to get to this goal.
They don't cause us to advance as it were. Maybe you have failed at something.
Just let it go. Perhaps you've even succeeded. Don't rest there either. The race isn't finished.
God still has more work ahead. But Paul continues. Paul not only tells us not to look back, but he says to us, he says, shrink toward what is ahead.
[28:13] that you've seen races. All of us have seen races before, particularly 100-meter races. We've seen athletes as they run and they strain towards the finish line.

And that's the sense that Paul tells us. Paul says, this is a race. This is an urgent race. We must give it all that we have. We must stretch ourselves.

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Lean into the finish line, brothers and sisters. Those of you who are older. But the truth is that no one knows when he, his last day.
Nobody knows. But can I say to all of us then that in these days all of us need to lean into the finish line.
The Christian life isn't passive though. It's not passive. And it's not about us swinging in and of ourselves.
[29:32] It's spirit energized. It's a spirit energized pursuit. we'll talk a little bit about that further. But the point that Paul is making to us is that we ought not to stop.

We ought to move with a sense of intentionality, a sense of purpose as believers. Intentional to grow in grace.
intentional to know Christ more and more. Intentional to be more holy. Intentional to make disciples. And intentional to become a disciple in an increasing way. Brothers and sisters, Paul tells us to keep our eyes on Jesus, to keep our eyes on the finished life.
keep your heart set on eternity. That is the message for you and for me, to keep our eyes on eternity. Though you stumble, brothers and sisters, press on.
[30:47] That's the message. That's the strategy. Though you fall down, listen, and we can fall down, though you fall down, the message is get up and press on and when doubts arise, as they will, when doubts arise, as they will, still press on.

Remember, brothers and sisters, we're not competing against one another. We're competing with one another.
together. And so we lock arms with one another. We lock arms with one another. And as you fall down, I'm right there holding you up and saying, come, come, sister, come, go with me.
And that's what a community, a church community, is all about, that we're in this together. We're not competing one with the other. But we are competing together, encouraging one another.
other. And we can say to our brothers and sisters, imitate me as I follow Christ.
[32:08] Lift each other up, reminding one another of the prize that lies ahead. Oh, brothers and sisters, I pray to God that it's true for us.

That we take every opportunity and every moment to support and to help each other in times of difficulty. When a brother falls down, when a sister falls down, that we are quick to go and support and to encourage that brother and that sister, rather than gossiping, can I tell you, can I tell you a little further that when you feel like quitting, just remember that you're not alone.
others stand with you. There are those who are standing with you today.
All you need to do is reach out. All you need to do is demonstrate a bit of humility and reach out. Hopefully you'll find a brother cheering you on. Keep going. We made it this far and we can't stop now. The Lord is able to keep you. He who started a good work in you will complete it until the day of salvation.
[34:03] Remind us of what Hebrews 12 and verses 1 and 2 says, that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.

So let us run this race, brothers and sisters, that is set before us, looking to Jesus, who is the finisher of our, the author and the finisher of our faith.
A final point. point number four, the prize. Paul writes in verse 14, that the prize is the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
us. Yes, it is true that we all have the goal to finish this race. But Paul says there is a prize that awaits us.
Brothers and sisters, there is a prize that awaits us. glory, prize. It is a trophy. It is not a title.
[35:32] It is not a position. It is the fullness of Christ, to be with him, to be like him.

God is the upward call. The eternal invitation to glory, brothers and sisters, the promise that we have is that one day you and I will be with and like Christ.
the crowd in heaven, the saints who have gone before are sharing.
They are saying to us, press on, don't stop. Press on, brothers and sisters, don't stop. The finish line is closer than you think.
2 Timothy chapter 4 verse 8 says, there is a crown of righteousness laid up for all who love his appearing.
[36:42] Brothers and sisters, that's what you and I have to look forward to. You and I have to look forward to a crown of righteousness. You and I have to look forward to being with him.

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That's the medal we run for. Christ himself, eternal fellowship, resurrection glory, the joy of being with him, the joy of being like him, having a new body.
imagine, brothers and sisters, just imagine for a moment, crossing the finish line and hearing your Savior say, well done, well done.
Brothers and sisters, oh, what a day that will be. all of life's pain and trials and difficulties will be worth it when we hear those words.
Well done, thou good and faithful servant. let the vision of heaven fuel your endurance on earth.
[38:21] Remember, every trial is a step closer to seeing Jesus face to face. brothers and sisters, we stand in a world filled with distractions and temptations.

Perhaps there's never been a period quite like the one we are in today. Yet the command to run the race to the finish line is still hours to follow.
Let's be intentional in our pursuits and we must run together, run together, encouraging one another, lifting up one another when we stumble.
As we conclude, Paul's message message to us, though, isn't simply try harder, it's trust deeper. Paul calls us to trust deeper, to trust more deeply in the Lord. We don't finish by sheer determination, we finish by grace.
[39:51] We finish because of the enablement of God himself. But let me ask you a question. How do Paul's words challenge you personally?

How do these words challenge you personally? Perhaps you challenged not to judge someone for a past failing.
perhaps perhaps you challenged not to judge yourself too harshly. Perhaps you're reminded that we are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone.
Perhaps you're reminded that even when you fall, grace, grace is there, holding on to you, reminding you to get up and to press on.
Brothers and sisters, you're not running this race alone. The Holy Spirit is your strength. Christ is your prize.
[41:21] So press on, brothers and sisters, not by might, not by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

Perhaps you're here or you're watching via live stream and you're wondering, what is the Christian race all about?
And how do I get started? Well, the truth is, if you ask genuinely, it's likely that your journey, which the Lord enables, has already begun.
and I would encourage you to reach out to pastor or member of the church or me, and we'll be happy to pray with and for you.
Let me bow our heads as we close. Lord, Father, the pull of this world is strong.
[42:44] Lord, we know from your word that you're stronger. Oh, Father, Lord, we are not unmindful, wandering thoughts.

But, oh, Lord, of things that those who've heard this message have considered. Father, I pray in the name of Jesus, we pray indeed, that the truth found in these words will be their lot, that they will remember that it is you, Father, who made a way for us through your Son, Jesus Christ, to be holy and to be righteous before you.
Oh, Lord, let not one look to himself or herself. But rather, oh, Lord, let us look to you. Let us not look back, oh, Lord, at failings or even successes.
But let us, oh, Lord, let each one of us press toward the mark as it were. oh, Father, it is our prayer that as brothers and sisters, Lord, that we will support one another in this race.
Oh, Lord, open our eyes to the help, to the care that others around us need and are crying out for.
[44:48] Help us not to be blinded to the others' needs, oh, Lord. Causes, oh, Lord, to prioritize others' needs even above our own.

And, Father, we pray also that you would help us to number our days and apply our hearts to wisdom as we run the race before us.
Lord, may we be even more purposeful as we stand with one another. In Jesus' name, and all God's people say, Amen.
Amen.

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