

Pressing On

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 November 2023

Preacher: John Lowrie

- [0 : 0 0] Verse 7, let's just read from verse 7 through to verse 14, or let me see, no, verse 16. Verse 7, I want to know Christ, yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow attaining to the resurrection from the dead.
- Verse 12, To win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.
- All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.
- Only let us live up to what we have already attained. We'll end our reading at the end of verse 16. Let's stand and we'll sing together.
- It's a good missionary song. We often sing this. This could be sung on Wednesday. Facing a task unfinished that causes us to pray, causes us to seek the Lord's face.
- [2 : 1 0] So let's stand and we'll sing this together. And we'll turn to God. They say a task unfinished.
- And we'll look at this passage together. Looking at what Paul says. Dissecting this. As we seek to understand. There's so much in the book of Philippians.
- So many well-known verses. And these are certainly well-known verses that we'll consider for what time we have left. Let's come before God.
- Let's ask for his help now as we study the scriptures together. Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for not only saving us, Lord, but we thank you for changing our course of life.
- For giving us hope and a purpose. We thank you, Lord, for not only saving us, but for calling us into service. For to present and to preach the good news of the gospel.
- [3 : 1 3] To share that good news with others. Lord, we've just been singing that great missionary song. Lord, facing a task unfinished. Lord, this evening, Lord, that task is still needing to be completed.
- Many people still need to hear the good news of the gospel. Not only in their own land, but throughout the world. We thank you, Father, for the many missionary endeavors that are taking place.
- Whether it's full-fronted gospel ministry. Explaining the good news and preaching the good news to those who know you not. Or translating the scriptures, Lord, into a language that people can understand.
- We thank you, Father, for the ministry of the local churches throughout the world as well. Lord, as they seek to reach out with the good news of the gospel. Into the communities where you have placed them.
- Lord, we are no different. And, Father, we really do pray for that the gospel here, Lord, would spread from this place. Give us wisdom. Give us initiatives, Lord, to show us how best we can do that.

- [4 : 16] Give us workers. Lord, raise up men and women, Lord, who can stand with us, Lord, in this vital aspect of gospel ministry. Lord, our heart goes out to those who know you not. Lord, whom the devil himself has in his grip. So, Father, we pray that you would help us in this. So, Father, bless us now, Lord, as we come to your word. Speak to us from it, Lord. Paul was never content, Lord, to be saved. May it never be our desire as well to be saved and satisfied. Instead, to be saved and serving. So, Father, just speak to us now. Encourage us, we pray. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. I want to show you this image of these two women. They have something in common. I don't know if you know what these two women have in common. One is Lona Salpeter, if I've pronounced her right, an Israeli woman. And the other one is probably certainly more well-known, I think, is Lindsay Jacobellus.
- [5 : 14] The two of them have something in common. They're famous because of something they got badly wrong. They're athletics, they're fit into sport and so forth. The woman at the top, Lona, she was in the European Championships in 2018 in Glasgow and in Berlin. And she made a monumental error. Here is the next image. Which, basically, wrong distance runner. She celebrated too quickly, if you remember. She had one more lap to go. And she stopped and she thought, whoopee, I've won the silver medal. Only to realise there was another lap. And when you've stopped, you simply can't pick it back up again. And it really is quite embarrassing. And this is how she finished. Show the next image there, Daniel. That's how she ended the race. It's not good. Crying her eyes out, lying in a heap in the grass.
- [6 : 14] The other one, Lindsay Jacobellus, was the same in the 2006 Olympics. I made a point of watching this again. And just, if you remember, I remember it very vividly. Because I like snowboarding. And she's charging down in the final. She's so far ahead of everyone else. And you remember that she's got two jumps to go. And she decides she's going to showboat. She's grabbing her snowboard and so forth. She's high-fiving. And she's not quite finished the race. And she, too, ends up lying flat on her back. And she fails. The gold medal was there for the taking. The commentator even says that. Well, the gold is sorted. It's really just now. Who's getting the silver? And she failed to get the gold. Both of them misjudged the race. They thought they had it all sorted. And they could take it easy. And everything was going to be okay. And they didn't finish as well as they should have finished.
- [7 : 15] That is what Paul really wants to emphasize in this section in Philippians 3. He's presented in the first nine verses of chapter 3. The most important thing. How are we pronounced righteous before God? We are pronounced righteous when we trust in the death of his son. We hear that verdict, not guilty. Christ's righteousness is now imputed to our account. What we thought were gains now get moved to the lost column. And Jesus is now in the gains column. Our bank account, our spiritual bank account is healthy. But Paul wants to emphasize that that is not the end. And sometimes many Christians think it is. I'm saved. I've made a professional faith in 1965. I know if I die, I'm going to heaven. And really, salvation is not the end of the Christian journey.

It's only the beginning of the Christian journey. There's a race to be run. There's a pressing on. And that's what Paul has been reminding us of. He reminded us of, first of all, what he has now.

[8 : 19] He has this righteousness. In verse 8 and verse 9, what he has is he's clothed in the righteousness of Christ. He has this. He ticks that box. You can take this. You have that.

You're a Christian. You have the righteousness of Christ. That is worth really rejoicing in. A righteousness that comes not from the law, but through faith. Then last week, we saw what he wants, what he really, really wants.

That song stayed with me until about Wednesday. Wednesday. I couldn't get it out of my head. I thought it was going crazy. I thought I was going to need some counseling. Tell you what I want, what I really, really want. You can take that away with you tonight.

It just drives you nutty. Anyway, we saw what he really wanted. I want to know Christ. Yes, he says in verse 10. Yes, I do want to know him. I want to know the power of his resurrection.

I want to participate in his sufferings. I want to become like him in his death and to be raised from the dead. In other words, he wants to experience Jesus now.

[9 : 18] He wants to know his power, his resurrection, to live a life worthy of him. He wants to be sanctified and ultimately he wants to be glorified.

And that's what we looked at last time. Now, if this is what he has and this is what he wants, he now tells us what he's doing now.

He's not just saying, I have this, I want this, but this is what I'm actually doing about all of these things. And he's telling us very plainly, not that I have already obtained all of this.

Verse 12. Or already arrived at my goal, I press on. And he mentions this a few times in this. I'm not there. I have not arrived.

But I press on. And that's what we're looking at just now. Pressing on to the goal, to the prize, to try and make some sort of sense of this.

[10 : 14] So let's look at this together. Three questions I want to answer this evening briefly. The what, the how, and the why of the Christian life.

The what, the how, and the why of Christian life. So the first question is this. What is it that Paul is pressing on towards? What is it he's really chasing after?

He basically says, when I began the Christian life, it's as if the Lord fired a starter pistol. And it set me on a race. It set me on a course. But what is he actually running after?

What is he striving after? First thing then is his calling. The calling of the Lord himself. He mentions this here in verse 12.

Not that I have already obtained all of this. Talking about the resurrection from the dead. The power of his resurrection. Or have already arrived at my goal. But I press on.

[11 : 12] To do what? To take hold of that which Christ took hold of me. It's a great expression. It says so much. He's basically looking back to his Damascus Road experience.

Where the Lord comes and took hold of him. Do you ever see your conversion as that? That it's not just I have decided to follow Jesus. That Jesus cut across you.

It might not be in the road to Damascus. It might be in the road to Balerno. Or somewhere. It might be in the house. It might be you'll know where you were saved. But at some point in your life. It might have been in a service.

Where you weren't expecting something. But the Lord came. And he took hold of you. It really is almost aggressive in that sense. He comes and maybe he's been working in your life before.

But at a time. The Lord came and he took hold of you. And by doing this. He didn't just save you. But he places your life on a new course. I knew this certainly.

[12 : 09] The next day after I was saved. The weekend before. Did what I normally did. Out with my mates. Partying away. Became a Christian on a Monday night. I always remember. Monday night. Wet Glasgow.

May the 12th. In the Kelvin Hall. I was living in Suckey Hall Street at the time. And then I come out. And I knew. The next weekend was going to be very different.

My mates. I wasn't going to hang around with them the same way. Wouldn't do the same thing. My life immediately went on a new course. And that was because. Christ. Not only did I take hold of him.

He took hold of me. Long before I took hold of him. And that's what Paul. Paul recognises this. That Christ took hold of him. And he wants to take hold of that.

Which Christ took hold of him. For. A life of personal holiness. You could say. A life of Christian service. To fulfil the mission. That the Lord has given him.

[13 : 06] Note that. To take hold of that. Which Christ took hold. Of me. When the Lord saved us. He saved us for a holy life. To live a life worthy of the gospel.

To live. To please him. To walk in. In humility. And holiness. With him. That is our calling. This isn't rocket science.

Tonight. You're called to be. A holy person. Before that. You were called to. You just did your own thing. You were your own boss. Now he is not only your savior. But he is your Lord.

And he's called you to live a life. Worthy of the gospel. To please him. You want to please him. This should be your desire. It's my desire. I don't please him perfectly. I don't always love him. As much as I should.

But that's a calling. To which he has. Called you. To walk humbly. With him. Secondly. What is he pressing on? To fulfill the calling.

[14 : 01] To a holy life. But also towards the goal. I press on towards the goal. For the Christian. Our goal. Ultimately.

Is not in this life. There is a goal. An ultimate goal. Like these two runners. There was a finishing line. A particular line. They just wanted to cross it. That was their goal. That line.

To be the first across us. For us. Next week. We'll look at verse 20. Paul reminds us. Ultimately. That our citizenship. Is in heaven. And we eagerly wait.

A savior from there. The Lord Jesus. But our goal. Is a place. We're looking forward. To a place. Ultimately. That's what we're looking forward to. Hebrews 11. Instead.

Talking about. The saints of old. They were longing. For a better country. A heavenly one. Therefore. God is not ashamed. To be called their God. For he has prepared.

[14 : 55] A city. For them. Jesus said. In my father's house. Are many rooms. I go. To prepare. A place for you. And I will come back. And take you. To be with me.

That you also. May be. Where I am. It's in the heart. Of the. Of the son. To come. To prepare a place. To come back. And take you. To be with him.

So there is a place. But there's also. A person. Our desire. Is not just to be in heaven. But to see. The Lord himself. It is. The son's desire.

That we are. With him. We are separated. By distance. Physically. And that. That way. But one day. Our faith. Will be turned to sight. And we will be with him. John 17. Father. I want those.

You have given me. To be with me. Where I am. To see. My. Glory. 1 Thessalonians 4. Paul describes.

[15 : 49] What the second coming. Will be like. After that. We who are still alive. And are left. Will be caught up. Together. With them. These dead ones. Rising from the grave. To meet them.

In the clouds. In the clouds. To meet the Lord. In the air. And so. We will be with the Lord. Forever. And then. Revelation. Right at the end. Of Revelation.

Now the dwelling. Of God. Is with men. He will live with them. They will be his people. And God himself. Will be with them. And be their God. That's quite a statement.

That God himself. Will be with them. And he will be. Their God. Athletes. Train. And they work hard. When the starter's pistol.

Goes off. They should know. Where they're going. Where they're running to. And what the line is. Where the finish line. How many laps there is. How many jumps.

[16 : 43] There are. And. They run towards a goal. You and I. Are called to holy living. Why? Because we want ultimately. To. To meet the Lord.

In the air. So. That is our goal. Having words. Holy calling. We're striving towards a goal. But also. A prize. To win. The prize.

It says. In verse. 14. I press on. Towards the goal. And at that goal. There is a prize. To win the prize. For which God has called. Me.

Heavenwards. In Christ. Jesus. What's the nature. Of this prize. That we're going to get. I bet you want me to tell you.

And we simply. Do not know. That. That is the thing. Isn't it? There's a prize. There's nothing. That disturbs a child more. You'll get a prize. What's the prize?

[17 : 37] Oh. You're going to have to wait. It just bursts our bubble. Doesn't it? What is the prize? We simply do not. Paul doesn't tell us. He doesn't spell out. Even the goal. But we know from his other writings.

What the goal is. But he doesn't tell us. What the prize is. One of the commentators. Says this. And I thought it was very good. Alec Mottier. One of the good guys. Says this. Sometimes a thing. Is all the more impressive.

For being left. Undescribed. Paul tells us. Neither what the goal is. Nor what the prize will be. Yet suddenly. The earthly scene.

With all its strivings. Sufferings. And sacrifices. Is filled with. Heavenly glory. One scriptural picture. After another. Fills and elevates the mind.

The Lord's own. Well done. The crown of righteousness. Which the Lord. The righteous judge. Will award to me. On that day. The unfading crown.

[18 : 33] Of glory. The privilege. Above all. That his servants. Should worship him. See his face. Have his name. Written on their foreheads. The blood-cleaned robes.

And the unending presence. Of the Lord. And all this. In addition. What no eye has seen. Nor ear heard. Nor the heart of man conceived.

What God has prepared. For those. Who love him. That is the goal. That is the prize. We do not know. No eye has seen. No heart conceived.

What God has prepared. For those who love him. It's. We've had a few birthdays. In our family. Or weddings. And what have you. And one of the things. Is they've just been doing up the room.

So when the bride comes. Or the birthday person comes. They open the door. And there's the balloons. And the streamers. And they go. Wow. Look at this. It's. I multiply that by a million.

[19 : 29] Who knows. What awaits us. In glory. I think because we don't know. We think it's never. Going to be anything. And we don't allow our mind. To wonder. But just imagine.

Hearing. Well done. John. Come and share. In your master's happiness. Paul says. There is in store for me. A crown of righteousness. Which the Lord.

The righteous judge. Will award to me. On that day. And not only to me. But to the great folk. In Westerhills. Who long for his. Appearing. The crown of glory.

Which shall never fade away. Does that thrill you. That whatever that prize is. Whatever that looks like. You think. It's been worth running for.

I've never really. I think I've received one or two medals. Usually. Medals. That you're. You're not going to put in a case. And show it to folk. It's kind of a cheapy thing. Stick in a drawer. You get it in the Sunday school.

[20 : 23] Running or whatever. But. You imagine. If. Getting some medal. An Olympic medal. And then they're on breakfast TV. And they're showing. Show me the medal. Wow.

It's heavy. Isn't it? That's great. They will keep that. They will prize that. For. Forever. We have a goal. We long for heaven. But there's a prize. And we don't know exactly what that prize is for you.

And for me. So Paul tells us what he's pressing towards. These three things. Then he tells us how he's pressing on towards that. First of all then.

He forgets the past. This is such an important thing. To forget the past. It says in verse 13. Brothers and sisters. I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.

But one thing I do. In other words. I'm going to set myself. One thing I do. The main thing that I do. As I press on towards these three things. I forget what is behind.

[21 : 21] And straining towards what is ahead. As you go through life. There are many things that leave you battered and bruised. That leave you scarred. They can define you.

It can be somebody that's upset you. I remember. In one church. I probably mentioned this to you. That when the Lord really blessed that church. In one particular service.

And one woman came at night. She says. Joanne I've been coming here for 23 years. This is the first time. That I really wanted to come. And. That person.

And not only that. That church. Were beginning to heal the past. Of hurts and things that people had said. It's very hard to run the race. When you're hurt.

You're limping. You're hindered by past things that's happened to you. A past hurt. That you've not been able to draw a line under. And to get closure on.

[22 : 15] You keep just pushing it down. But it's always there. And Paul says he has to forget the past. The past will hinder you. Given every opportunity. The devil will use this.

To hinder you in the race. And you'll just limp along. And you'll be miserable. As you press on. And you need to forget. Past wrongs. Past sins.

As I said to you. The men. That had committed crime. And now that they had been forgiven. They kept raking over. What they had done. Has the Lord really forgiven me?

I've changed the lives of so many families. By this particular crime. Does the Lord really forgive me? And they have to receive the forgiveness of the Lord. They have to forget this.

And bury it deep. And accept that forgiveness once and for all. And press on. And it's such an important thing. Sin. Low self-esteem.

[23 : 13] Past experiences. Life's experiences. Disappointed by people. Personal failure. Unanswered prayers. Confusion over the Lord's dealings with us.

Lord why didn't he do this? I'm finding it hard. All of these things hinder us from pressing on towards the goal. In 2022 Lindsay Jacobellis finally won her gold medal.

The BBC ran an article last year on this. It says this. This was the headline. Winter Olympics. Lindsay Jacobellis snowboard cross gold exercises demons from Turin.

And it said this. If ever there was a lesson in never giving up. Lindsay Jacobellis is its epitome. Showing perseverance at its finest. The American never relented in chasing her Olympic gold dream.

Her fifth games finally delivered the gold medal she once threw away. She's had to live with that for such a long time. You just hear her name and you go.

[24 : 21] She was a dumpling that lost that gold medal. And after five goes she finally gets this gold medal. She never gives up. She persevered because of the prize.

She wanted the prize. She's written a book as well. Her memoir is called Unforgiven Lessons from the Fall. That's her whole life. Her whole life is defined by that fall.

But she persevered through it. She didn't let it define who she was. You and I need to continually forget the past. Forget the past.

Sin, mistakes, failures. If we confess our sin he's faithful and just to cleanse us from all sin and so forth. We know that all things God works for the good of those who love him.

Who have been called according to his purpose. So in our hearts and minds we need to continually forget the past if we are to press on. So first of all how does Paul press on?

[25 : 19] Forget the past. Secondly straining forward. He strains towards what is ahead. He's very much using a racing analogy. I must confess whenever I watch the hundred meters or whatever and it's all frantic and there's so many bodies coming up to the line at once.

Unlike the distance runners there's usually one guy or one woman away ahead. But in certain races it's just that wee boop and you stretch. And I thought boy you'd be gutted if he just didn't do that wee strain.

The wee bit right at the end where it just for .001 of a second your big toe managed to beat the other person. Just doing that was enough. Just straining whatever it takes.

Even falling over the line. And Paul's basically saying he's straining. He's using great effort to win this race.

He says straining towards what is ahead. If ever there's a definition of what the Christian life is like it's that verse. It's not easy. It's not a stroll.

[26 : 24] We're not just saying. We're not showboating. I'm saved. You're not saved. I'm a Christian. You're not a Christian. And you're just easy on through life. We don't do these things to earn our salvation.

But we see the goal and we think there's still a goal. There's still a prize. I want to press on. I want that prize. I want to win that thing. And it's a recognition of the Christian life.

It's a one of hard pursuit. So that's how Paul is pressing on. Finally, why is he pressing on? Well, you could say it's the goals. It's the calling. It's all these things.

But he mentions a couple of things here that's worth noting in closing. Why does Paul press on for the goal and the prize? Maturity.

That is the first thing. Maturity. It is to do with maturity. The mature Christian, he says, understands this. What the Christian life is all about. A spirit of holiness and godliness and service.

- [27 : 25] It's a sign of maturity. Look at verse 15. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. If you ever meet a Christian and it says, well, you know, yeah, I was saved.
- I used to meet a lot of folk who made professions of faith. They're going nowhere. They're not serving the Lord. They're not attending. They're not worshipping. They're not doing anything. They're just coasting.
- They're not straining or pressing. They don't talk about the goal. They don't desire the goal. They don't desire a prize or anything. They are just drifting. And you cannot help but think they're either not Christians or they're incredibly immature.
- They really don't know what it's all about. Paul says, if you want to know if you're mature, a godly man or woman, is this your desire as well?
- To press on. The mature Christian recognizes this, that we haven't arrived. We need to press on. But it's like Beirut out there, isn't it? If it was there this last week, I'll keep thinking it's me hitting this thing.
- [28 : 27] Going boom, boom, boom. Wow. Anyway, we're nearly finished. We're nearly finished. What must it be like in the Middle East just now if you're a Christian and just trying to cope with all of that?
- This is nothing. This is play stuff, isn't it? This is just wee light bulbs that's gone off. It's nothing. Crazy. So the mature person, and that's the thing to ask yourself, is that me?
- Can I say I'm mature? And if that's your desire, it's not just to be saved, but to press on for this goal, for this price, to fulfill the calling, this calling to a holy life.
- You're in a race. You're in a battle. You press on. You press on with confidence. And Paul is sure that even if you're a Christian and that you are showing some signs of maturity, even if you don't agree with everything he says, look at verse 15.
- It says, even if at some point you think differently, God will make that clear to you as well. He'll lead you. He'll guide you. He'll make his will plain if you're a mature Christian. So Paul says, why?
- [29 : 34] Because it's a sign of maturity. I know that I'm living the life I should. And lastly, responsibility. We'll finish with this. He says in verse 16, only, in other words, whatever you do, let us live up to what we have already attained.
- You might think, well, I wish I was further on. I wish I was more mature. I wish I was nearer the goal. I wish I had my prize and so forth. Paul is now calling out to the individual.
- And he says, live up to what you have already attained. All the blessings of the gospel. Whatever you know, seek to live out that.
- Seek to walk humbly with God. If you're a Christian, you will have learned much over the Christian life. You should say you're more mature now than you were when you first believed.
- You know more of the Bible. It was great. Somebody coming in saying they would like to read the Bible through in a year, next year. When I do, once I finish the elders thing, we'll look at prayer.
- [30 : 38] We'll look at, briefly, daily readings. And what that might mean as you start January the 1st, 2024. 2024. That's why I'm doing it at this side of the new year.
- So that you hit the ground running after you've sang Auld Lang Syne and wished everybody you go to bed. Boom. A whole new spiritual life opens up for you. I don't know, but it does it to me every year. I just think, I turn the calendar.
- Well, I fling the old calendar in the bin. I get the new calendar out, January the 1st. And I think, great Lord, help me to be better than last year. And it's living up to what you already have.

Being consistent with that. And the more that you live up to this, the more the Lord will give you. If you keep asking for things and not using them or whatever, you're just almost heaping judgment on yourself.

But if you walk with the Lord, you get more and more and more of Him. And it begins by living up to what we already know. With knowledge, with salvation, all of these things comes with responsibility.

[31 : 44] So if we are to be mature, live up to what you know just now. Confess the sin. Move on with the Lord. So here, Paul has shared with us not only what he has, what he wants, but what he's doing.

He's pressing on towards his calling, to fulfill his calling, to take hold of that which Christ took hold of him. The goal is heaven, is Christ himself.

The prize we do not know, a crown, glory, we do not fully know. But he desires this prize that the Lord will give him.

How is he pressing on? Forgetting the past, straining ahead. Why is he doing this? Because it's a sign of responsibility, living up to what he knows that he might grow in maturity.

Does all of that make sense? Boy, you've had a lot of stuff today, both this morning and this evening. There might just be one wee thing out of that that you have to take away. Maybe this morning, one thing.

[32 : 46] You control your tongue, whatever that is. And that is good. Whatever that is, moving towards maturity. Let's close, shall we, before we get swamped by all sorts of stuff.

To... To... To...